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HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Volume 37 Issue 3 Spring 2017



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HEALTH OF BODY AND SPIRIT

How can we rediscover child-like harmony of body and spirit?

A Publication of

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HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Human Development Magazine is a quarterly publication for people involved in the work of fostering the human and spiritual growth of others. This includes persons involved in religious leadership and formation, spiritual direction, pastoral care, education and those interested in the development of the whole person.

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baby plays in doctor toy teddy bear and stethoscope

By JenkoAtaman



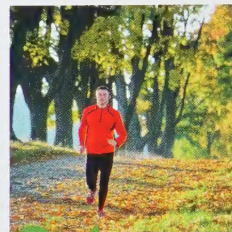
6

EMBODIED SPIRIT



16

THE HOLINESS OF
THE BODY



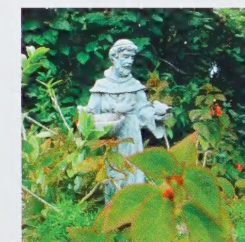
24

WITH THE SCARS
TO PROVE IT



36

THE BODY AS AN
INSTRUMENT OF
PRAYER



44

VULNERABILITY



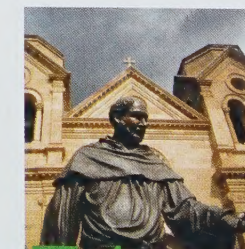
56

WOUNDED HEALER



64

COMING TO
WHOLENESS



74

CLEARING THE
CHANNEL



80

PRAISING AND
GLORIFYING GOD
AS EMBODIED
SPIRITS

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Spring 2017

Dear friends of Human Development Magazine:

Shalom! This Hebrew greeting conveys not only our wishes for your peace but also our hopes for the well-being of your body and spirit. Such is the wish of our editorial board as you read this issue.

Many life-long, dedicated Christians struggle to understand the rich meaning and challenging implications of the Incarnation of Our Lord. We carry with us a certain ambivalence about the dignity and spiritual significance of our body. While none of us would claim to be Platonists, we can at times fall into the subtle temptation of separating body and spirit rather than thinking of ourselves as a composite whole. Intellectually we know that the body is much more than just an "enclosure" for the soul! But emotionally we do not always put all the pieces together. This issue hopes to underscore our identity as "embodied spirits."

St. Paul speaks about Christ as the "fullness of deity dwelling bodily;" (Colossians 2:19). He also invites the Corinthians to "glorify God in your body;" (I Corinthians 6:20). And in Romans 12, he speaks about offering our bodies as a living sacrifice to God. Clearly St. Paul had an appreciation of "body," even to the point of describing the Church itself as the Body of Christ.

Indeed, the whole "sacramental economy" of the Church presumes that the body is a worthy temple of the Lord and a manifestation of God's presence, a means of communicating that presence or glory back to God and to others. St. John Paul II often spoke about the "nuptial meaning of the body" and the Benedictine Monk Hugh Gilbert writes of the "diaconal" meaning of the body, a sacred instrument of service.

Our contemporary culture tends to the extremes. Many negate anything bodily since it would seem to take us away from the "purity" of experiencing God. At the other end of the spectrum, if there is not enough reverence for the body, we can think of it as merely a vehicle for pleasure and fail to see the sacredness of all that is sensual. How do we find the balance and thus truly live out the story of Jesus Christ?

Luke Timothy Johnson tackles this question head-on in his well-received recent work, *The Revelatory Body*. His introductory article sets the tone for the issue, "Embodied Spirit, the Mystery of Divine Presence." Johnson suggests

that just as we "exegete" the Scriptures, we should do something analogous with our "embodied spirits," for they too are a means of God's self-revelation. Near the end of his article, he also challenges us to develop a more playful spirit, engaging our bodies in ways that connect with others and the world of nature.

Father Timothy Radcliffe, former Master General of the Dominican Order, writes of "The Holiness of the Body," and reminds us that St. Dominic founded the Order of Preachers because of a widespread heresy in the 12th and 13th Century which despised the dignity of the body. He also offers a lovely meditation on the five senses as windows of God.

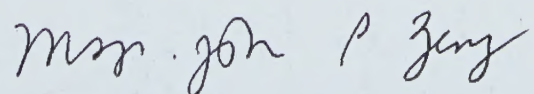
An autobiographical essay on scars of body and spirit "With Scars to Prove It..." by Father John Celichowski, former provincial of the Capuchin Friars, outlines insights he has attained by reflection on struggles of his own body and challenges from leadership and formation ministry. He moved me to tears; I am sure you will also be deeply touched. Dr. Tom Petriano describes body as "An Instrument of Prayer," and speaks about the body posture and prayer in various world religions.

Caroline Wroblewski and Sister Mary Ellen Merrick, both therapists at Guest House in Michigan, write about vulnerability and being "wounded healers." Dr. Kevin Keenan speaks out of extensive therapeutic experience and notes the critical link of body-spirit; he states that feelings are felt in our bodies, not our minds, and then are eventually named and regulated. An excellent article with challenging insights for care-givers as well as care-recipients. Therapist and counselor, Jeff Jay, offers reflections on how to save ourselves from burnout.

As a short piece to round out the issue, I put together a reflection that might be of use as a spiritual examen or perhaps for a communal penance service.

As the warmth and light of spring and the Easter season quicken new life within us, I hope these essays will be both a comfort and challenge, bringing peace of body and spirit! Shalom!

Your brother in the Lord,



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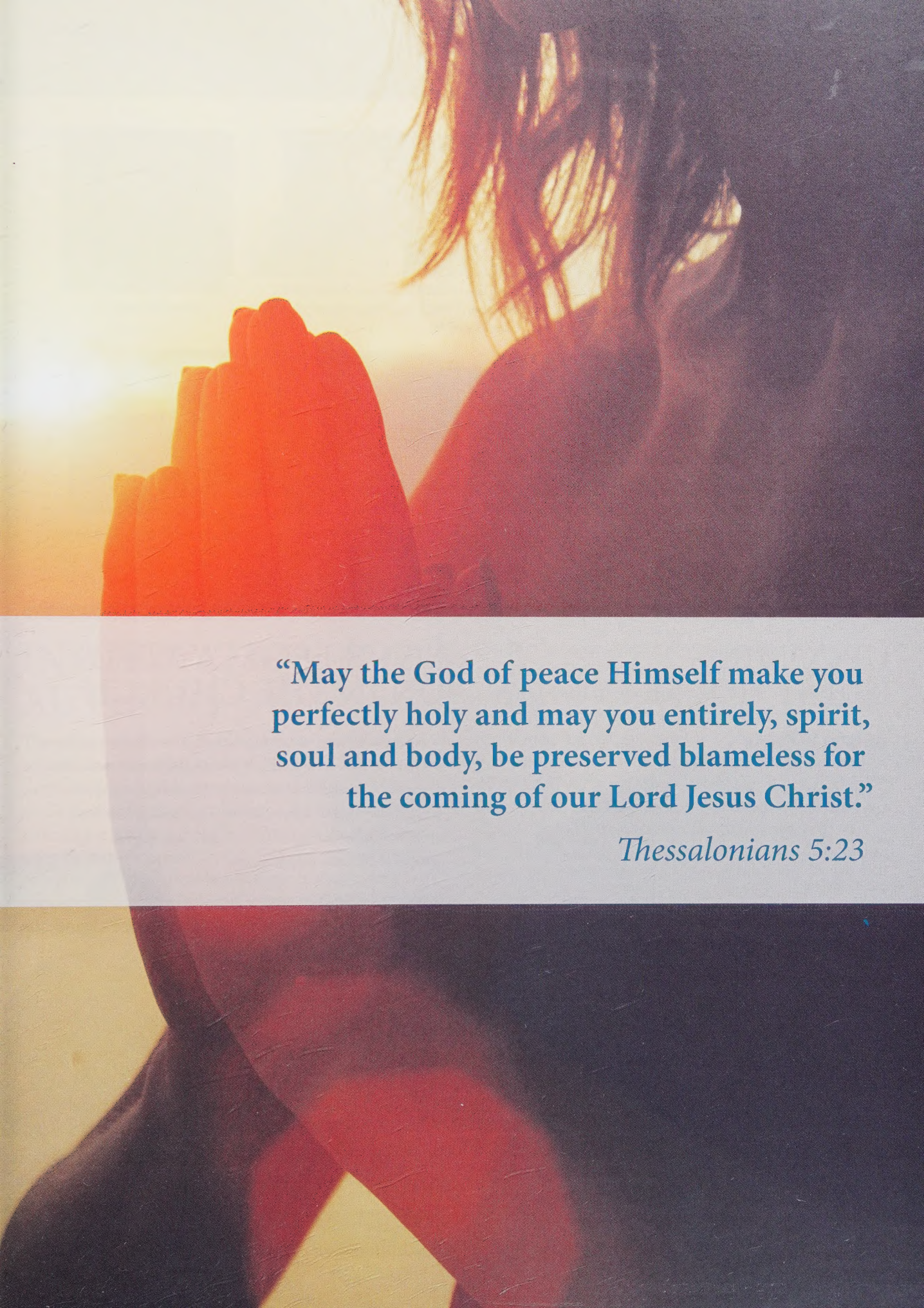
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“May the God of peace Himself make you perfectly holy and may you entirely, spirit, soul and body, be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Thessalonians 5:23

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Lake Orion, MI

June 7-9, 2017
Walking With the Wounded
Guest House Scripps Mansion
Lake Orion, MI

June 12, 2017
32nd Annual Golf Classic
Oakhurst Golf & Country Club
Clarkston, MI

July 2-8, 2017
ICAP Retreat
Carmelite Retreat Center
Darien, IL

July 10-12, 2017
16th Annual Guest House
Summer Leadership Conference
Providence Biltmore Hotel
Providence, RI

July 31-August 3, 2017
Alumni Reunion
Seminary of the Immaculate
Conception
Huntington, NY

August 6-12, 2017
ICAP Retreat
Guest House Scripps Mansion
Lake Orion, MI

October 2-5, 2017
Alumni Fall Retreat
Immaculate Retreat House
Willimantic, CT

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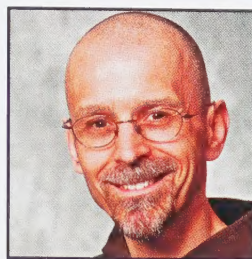




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Johnson



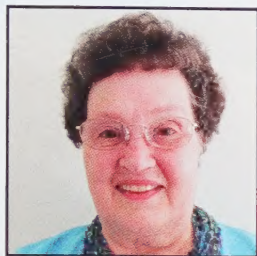
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INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS

The editors of *Human Development* are quite eager to publish articles that translate the latest research in psychology, health, medicine, and spirituality to ministry, formation and practice. Our hope is that *Human Development* will be known as the most user-friendly ministry publication. This will require making complicated theoretical knowledge, research, and concepts understandable and applicable to the personal and professional lives of our readers.

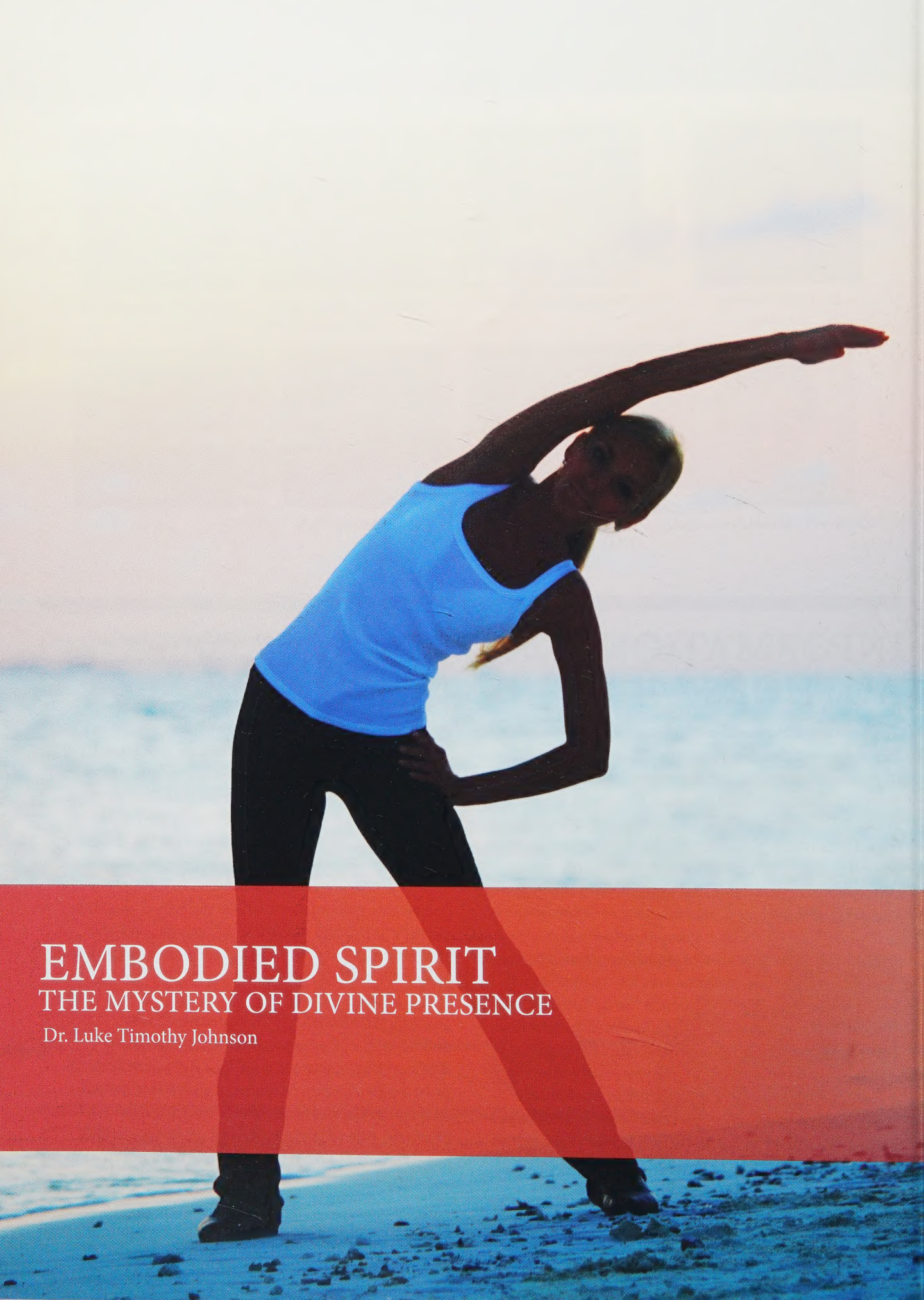
Since ministry is in a time of significant transition and change, we anticipate that the articles we publish will enlighten and positively influence the daily decisions and practices of those in Church leadership, ministry formation, spiritual direction, and counseling of any kind. There are also a number of previously underappreciated forces that uniquely influence ministry and ministers: cultural, organizational, and situational factors. We intend to highlight and honor these factors in the pages of *Human Development*. Accordingly, we ask prospective authors to be mindful of these considerations in their manuscripts. Manuscripts are received with the understanding

that they have not been previously published and are not currently under consideration elsewhere. Feature articles should be limited to 4,500 words (15 double-spaced pages), with no more than six recommended citations and/or readings; filler items of between 500 and 1,000 words will be considered. All accepted material is subject to editing. When quoting sacred scripture, the New Revised Standard Version is preferred. All manuscripts are to be prepared according to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th edition).

Letters are welcome and will be published as space permits and at the discretion of the editors. Such communications should not exceed 600 words and are subject to editing.

Authors are responsible for the completeness and accuracy of proper names in both text and Bibliography/suggested readings. Acknowledgments must be given when substantial material is quoted from other publications. Provide author name(s), title of article, title of journal or book, volume number, page(s), month and year, and publisher's permission to use material.

Manuscripts should be submitted to Msgr. John Zenz at editor@hdmag.org as an email attachment.



EMBODIED SPIRIT

THE MYSTERY OF DIVINE PRESENCE

Dr. Luke Timothy Johnson



At first glance, this seems to be the best of all possible times for the human body, at least in our affluent first-world culture. If we carefully adjust our blinders so that we see nothing of the poverty, hunger, disease, violence, and general physical misery that chronically afflict the vast majority of people on our planet, and fix our gaze only on our own environment --- now, isn't that more comfortable? ---there is much to recommend the proposition that, when it comes to our bodies, we indeed inhabit a brave new world. Plus, using all the means of transportation available to us, we can carry our privileged bodies to any part of the globe that seems to us quaint and unspoiled, remaining untouched by the pestholes just outside five-star hotels, and staying imperturbably serene so long as our blinders are firmly attached.

Think of it: just with what the local supermarket supplies, we eat better, and certainly more, than the fabled kings and emperors of old. We wear clothes so elegant and comfortable that they once would have commanded a king's ransom. Our bodies are washed, oiled, powdered, perfumed, tattooed, pierced, and cosmetically enhanced. We can make ourselves bald and, reputedly, grow our hair back again; we can practice artistic topiary on our cranial and facial hair. Our straightened and polished teeth gleam spectacularly. In terms of sheer physical appearance, we are undoubtedly the healthiest and handsomest humans who have ever walked the Earth.

We also enjoy a range of remedies for small deficiencies. The vast Medical-Pharmaceutical Complex provides a cornucopia of pills, capsules, patches and injections to anaesthetize and sometimes narcotize our every pain. We have diets to correct the obesity that comes from eating like kings and queens; we have huge temples dedicated solely to the cult of the body. Here, by assiduous devotion to our chosen transformative apparatus, our bodies can be slenderized or expanded, according to taste, and in every instance made healthier and more attractive to ourselves and others. While churches in America grow empty, LA Fitness is thronged. In these centers and in the propaganda driving entertainment and advertising, aging is postponed and death is denied. There are Viagra and Cialis for the diminished libido, implants for those with less-than-perfect dentition, eyeglasses and contact lenses for the visually challenged, invisible hearing aids for those going deaf.

Ours is an age when the denial of death and the avoidance of aging have led as well to previously unheard of manipulations of the body in the name of health and beauty. Limb replacements and prostheses are routine; organ transplants have nearly become so. Cosmetic surgery joins the cult of physical perfection with readily available (to the affluent) lifts and implants and suctions and injections. Fetal

harvesting and genetic engineering, and human cloning --- once the stuff of scary science fiction --- are increasingly practiced. Transgendering through hormones and surgery and socialization is now regarded as a civil right, to be protected by law.

And through all of this, the cybernetic revolution is constantly at work: the digital revolution provides the technology for much of what has come to be called body-sculpting, and through various forms of media provides justification for it. In one way or another, humans are rapidly becoming cyborgs. Our contemporary first world-culture regards human bodies as things we "have," like cars and houses, and we can do with them what we do with other things we have: change the tires, add a room, alter gender.

ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

There is a darker aspect to our preoccupation with the body, which a gaze longer than a glance begins to reveal. The pursuit of physical gratification in the first world stands in ever more shocking contrast to the struggles for survival among the rest of the world's peoples. And even among the privileged, a quest for a perfect, indeed immortal, body leads inevitably to frustration, because, in fact, humans do inevitably age and die. And while we live, the constant projection of physical beauty and vigor has led, paradoxically, to a variety of pathologies.

Sexual liberation has turned out to be anything but liberating, as patterns of sexual addiction, pornography, and human trafficking reveal. The projection of beautiful bodies by advertising to sell products --- although the distinction between using sex to sell and selling sex becomes ever harder to make --- is a body that exists mainly by virtue of lighting and airbrushing. But such images generate what has come to be called Body Dysmorphic Disorder among the impressionable young, with its accompanying manifestations of anorexia and bulimia. Other forms of physical dysphoria are the stimulus to change genders.

Absent spirit, the human body is simply a corpse. Language about spirit is largely absent from today's scientific discourse, which brackets what it cannot control and focuses on the material processes that are accessible to its modes of analysis.

DAMAGE IS INTERPERSONAL AS WELL AS INDIVIDUAL

Social media have spawned the form of hate-speech called "body shaming," which is familiar from the barbs that comics like Joan Rivers once made about celebrities like Elizabeth Taylor, but now has become democratized, so that anyone's appearance is fair game for ridicule, from pre-school on. And in the public realm, we observe forms of discrimination (shunning, shaming, segregating) exercised against those failing egregiously with regard to ugliness, disfigurement, illness, or age.

Such grotesque distortions are the logical consequence of what Scripture calls idolatry. For the prophets and the apostle Paul, idolatry is not a trivial accident but a fundamental disease of human freedom, the willful choice to treat as ultimate that which is not ultimate. When any finite thing is asked to bear the weight of obsessive attention and compulsive service --- whether it is pleasure, or possessions, or power --- two results invariably follow: the thing made absolute is disfigured, and those who worship it are diminished.

The idolatrous treatment of the body in our first-world culture is directly connected to severing the physical body from the spirit. There was a time, not so long ago, when philosophers and social scientists and even theologians celebrated the liberation of the human body from what they regarded as centuries of its enslavement to spiritual concerns. The dualism of body and spirit, they said, always turned out to be prejudicial towards the body. The body's desires and passions needed to be subdued in order for the

spirit to achieve its eternal destiny. Such "spirituality" seemed, in extreme cases, to neglect important material realities; fleeing the world, critics insisted, did not lead to tending the Earth. In some quarters, indeed, Christian asceticism and mysticism were regarded as the retardants of science, technology, and the enthronement of the body in its proper, central, place. But the modern reaction of putting body over spirit --- indeed, ignoring or suppressing the spirit in order to nurture the body --- has paradoxically had the same result in the opposite direction. The idolatrous cultivation of the body as supremely important has led to the neglect of what actually makes the body important, which is spirit.

RECOVERING SPIRIT

Absent spirit, the human body is simply a corpse. Whether we use the word spirit, or soul, we mean the life-principle that enlivens and animates the package of material elements that without it, rots and returns to the earth. Language about spirit is largely absent from today's scientific discourse, which brackets what it cannot control and focuses on the material processes that are accessible to its modes of analysis. It is notably absent as well from the worlds of politics, economics, commerce, and entertainment. To speak seriously of spirit, or even of spirituality, seems trivial or even reactionary --- what an earlier generation would call "flakey" --- to those committed to the quantification and commodification of all reality. More's the pity, for without a language that engages the side of human physicality that makes it more than mere matter, the human body itself cannot be fully appreciated, and can easily be distorted by idolatrous impulses. Here, above all, we

stand in need of the perspectives made available to us by philosophers, theologians, and mystics of earlier and saner ages, who understood what we keep trying to forget, that spirit is not only real, it is what is most real, because, at the heart of existence is God, and God is Spirit.

A saner view of the human person does not privilege the body over the spirit or the spirit over the body, but regards spirit and body as mutually defining aspects of those created, Scripture tells us, in the image of God. Thus, the awkward phrase “embodied spirit” in my title. If the body without spirit is dead and communicates nothing, so the spirit needs a body in order to express itself in the world. And God, as Spirit, equally needs a body in order to reveal Godself in the world. The primary and essential instance is creation itself: the material world is God’s instrument of self-expression: God speaks implicitly through everything that God brings into and sustains in existence. But preeminently, God uses the embodied spirits of humans --- those created in God’s image and likeness --- to be God’s medium of communication within the creation.

It is striking that Scripture does not speak of itself as “revelation.” Scripture rather points to creation as revealing God, and, within creation, the human body as the privileged arena of divine self-disclosure. Thus, in the covenants with Abraham and Moses, the people of Israel revealed God’s glory, that is his presence and power, through the observance of Torah; thus, the prophets expressed God’s word through their speech and body-language that summoned the people to covenantal fidelity. Thus, most perfectly and fully, God’s Spirit was expressed in the Word made flesh, the humanity of Jesus, who

reveals fully what it means for humans to be created in the image of God. Thus, consequently, the Church, which is designated quite deliberately by Paul as the “Body of Christ” because, filled and guided by the Holy Spirit coming from the “life-giving spirit of the risen Jesus (1 Cor 15:45), it bears witness to the presence and power of God among all humans.

We pay attention to the human body, therefore, not because it is of ultimate importance by itself, but because through the human body, God’s presence and power can be disclosed. But such “paying attention” clearly demands a different sort of approach than that displayed by our contemporary secular culture, in which the body is simultaneously exalted and degraded.

PROBLEM OR MYSTERY?

I borrow the distinction between problem and mystery from the French Catholic Existentialist philosopher, Gabriel Marcel, whose thought has fundamentally shaped mine since I first read him some fifty years ago. Marcel notes that there is a class of things rightly considered as problems. They stand outside us, can be regarded objectively, and can at least in principle be “solved” by the application of analysis, calculation, and manipulation. Physics, biology, and automobile mechanics are examples. We do not want to get personally involved with our carburetor, or get subjective about our tax returns. Problem-solving is perfectly appropriate when it comes to budgets and crossword puzzles.

But, Marcel notes, there is another realm that does in fact involve us in our deepest subjectivity, from which we cannot detach ourselves without distortion. Such are our relationships with other

As human beings, we not only “have” bodies, we also “are” bodies; we are deeply and inextricably involved in our bodily selves. Our bodies are not problems to be solved; they are mysteries to be celebrated and suffered.



persons, with ourselves, and with God. Marcel calls this realm the realm of mystery. We are implicated by such relationships; we cannot stand outside them as though we were objective. We cannot problem-solve our marriage, parenting, prayer life. If we try, we end by distorting them.

The sort of thinking appropriate to mystery, then, is not “objective,” analytic, calculating, or manipulating. It is rather open, receptive, reflective, discerning, aware at every moment that our very selves are implicated, and that before we act we must first of all, in fact constantly, listen, to hear what the mystery can teach us. It should be clear to you by now that the phrase “embodied spirit” points us to the realm of the mysterious more than the problematic. As human beings, we not only “have” bodies, we also “are” bodies; we are deeply and inextricably involved in our bodily selves, with the traffic moving both ways: we not only command our bodies, our bodies also command us; we not only instruct our bodies, our bodies instruct us. If we can learn to listen. Our bodies are not problems to be solved; they are mysteries to be celebrated and suffered.

For those of us who profess faith in the Living God, who as Spirit, presses on his creation at every moment that he brings it into being, the mysterious character of humans as embodied spirits is deepened, for Scripture tells us that the Living God chooses to reveal himself precisely through the human body. Precisely this understanding of the “good news,” that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself (2 Cor 5:19), and that as “Life-Giving Spirit” (1 Cor 15:45) the risen Christ was the source of the Spirit that animated and elevated the lives of believers, so that, as Church, they were the “Body of Christ” (1 Cor 12:4-27) and the place where the mystery of God’s plan for all people was being disclosed (Eph 3:8-11), accounts for the tremendous energy and excitement that characterizes the earliest Christian writings. Grace ---the gift of God --- was not an abstract proposition for them, but was real, experienced in their bodies: the love of God had been poured into their hearts through the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5) and had the power to transform them (Rom 12:1-3; 1 Cor 2:16; 2 Cor 3:17-18) into a “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15). The Apostle Paul, in whose letters we find these convictions expressed



most powerfully, therefore exhorts his listeners to “pay attention” (1 Thess 5:6) to “discern” (1 Cor 14:29) to “grow in knowledge” (Col 1:6) of what the Holy Spirit of God was doing within and among their bodies. What Paul demanded concerning the Lord’s Supper can stand as applicable to all Christian existence: “discern the body” (1 Cor 11:29).

INDUCTIVE THEOLOGY

Christian theology, alas, quickly lost this sense of experiential urgency and excitement. The need to repel heresies and the desire to meet intellectual challenges led theologians to the development of creeds, and then more and more elaborate systematic structures built on a propositional structure. By the high Middle Ages, theology was considered the “queen of the sciences,” a thoroughly rational exposition of the contents of Christian belief. And things went downhill from there! Although mystics and masters of prayer maintained a lively sense of God’s presence and power, such devotional expressions failed to challenge or change an understanding of theology that developed in the universities as a deductive science rather than an inductive art. Rather than a means of engaging the mysterious movements of God’s Holy Spirit within and among human experience --- a messy

but enlivening task --- theology became the most abstract of exercises, located in academic cloisters, far removed from the hurly-burly of everyday life. Hearing such theologians, and the preachers shaped by such theologians, one might conclude that God’s work was all done, that revelation was comprehensively contained in the ancient writings we call Scripture, and that faith was simply a matter of pronouncing the proper formulas of belief.

Although in the past two centuries many theologians have rejected such an abstract understanding of theology and have “turned to the subject” as the starting point for theological reflection, they have not, for the most part, gone nearly far enough. Their construction of the “subject” tends to become almost as abstract and static as the dogmas against which they revolt. Even liberation theologians, who explicitly take as their starting point the “experience” of the oppressed, can slip all too easily into sociological stereotypes and ideological fixations. Because the discipline of theology remains an academic enterprise with the goal of writing books (with covers that close) rather than a gift of the Spirit to which all believers are called within the Church, theologians have seldom succeeded in paying real attention to real human bodies. But it is precisely

such attentiveness to the individual, various, and ambiguous manifestations of God's Spirit in human experience that theology must learn, if it is truly to be an articulation, not of set beliefs stated in propositions, but of trust and obedience in the Living God who moves constantly before us as he creates the world at every moment.

In short, theology needs to learn how to be an inductive art rather than a deductive science. To do this, it must let go of false objectivity and detachment, and become willing to learn from the body and from the spirit that discloses itself (or is obscured by) somatic experience in the world. It must open itself to the truth that God's revelation continues in the world even as God's creation is renewed every day, and that not the exegesis of ancient texts alone, but above all, the exegesis of real-life experience is demanded of those who profess faith in the Living God. Christian theology can thus become truly counter-cultural to an age that has, through its idolatrous fixation on the body-absent-spirit, and through its manipulation of the body as a problem to be solved rather than as a mystery to be celebrated and suffered, distorted and damaged not only the human spirit but the human body as well. If theology adopts the humble posture of careful attentiveness and profound listening, it can learn from embodied spirit something of what God is up to in our world, and what faith in God demands of us in our world.

THE EXAMPLE OF PLAY

There are important aspects of our somatic experience about which Scripture has little or nothing to say, yet are of extraordinary importance in our lives. Activities as quotidian as play and work are scarcely touched on by Scripture, yet offer rich possibilities for learning about the presence of God's Spirit in creation. Here I have space only for play.

Note that I speak about play rather than sports. The significance of that distinction will become clear in a moment. Play is, on the evidence, a universal

human activity, and may in fact link us to other creatures: porpoises, otters, and puppies clearly engage in what we would think of as play, even if it is a form of training for adult life. Among humans, play is found in its purest form among children, but can be recognized in any form of communally shared, rules-bound activity that is, in Johannes Huizinga's memorable phrase, "purposeless but meaningful." Play is purposeless: we don't do it in order to accomplish something else, but do it for its own sake; its meaningfulness, in turn, is found in the experience itself: it is "fun" or a "delight." We see this in children playing tag or hide-and-seek or "Captain may I," but we recognize it in adults as well when they sing together in choir or act in a drama or have quilting bees or dance. Such things are not done "to win," much less to "earn money," or even "to get fit" (all those purposes), but for their own sake. In this sense, liturgy is a form of religious play, not done in order to make something happen, but done because it expresses as nothing else can the delight humans experience in being children of God. For humans to play, they must take "time out" from work and the pursuit of profit, even if the time out is only for the length of the game. Sabbaths and festivals express the deep human longing for time and space set aside for play.

All play in the proper sense is intensely ordered, and all participants implicitly agree to follow the rules set out for this sort of play; cheating is the one great sin in play precisely because it destroys the fabric of trust that true play requires. The way that play engages our bodies in coordinated activity is obvious: we dance, using these steps, we sing, using these notes, we throw and catch balls in turn. And our bodies rejoice in such movement precisely because it is at once arbitrary, ordered, and communal; we experience physical exhilaration. But play also discloses spirit. We can all attest how, when we are playing with others, we have at the same time an acute sense of being ourselves while also experiencing a sense of being part of something larger than ourselves, as when we sing in chorus or play in a band. The sense

of “moving with one mind” occurs most frequently in games requiring separate but coordinated movement among participants. What we experience is transcendence: without a word being spoken, our embodied spirit (without in the least leaving our individual body) contacts and connects with the spirit of others in and through their bodies. How? This is the mystery!

True play is one of the purest expressions of spiritual communion and cooperation among humans. Then, what about sports --- the example of “play” many of us would first think of? Sports and games of every kind are indeed a form of play. The difference is the element of competition they introduce. All the elements of pure play can be present, including the experience of transcendence --- basketball players sometimes speak of feeling “in the zone” when all team members move in perfect coordination. But in competitive sports, winning becomes the goal. Play is now “purposeful,” that is, a kind of work. This is already the case in sand-lot baseball and pickup basketball. But when there is organization into teams and leagues, with coaches and managers, and referees and designated arenas, and fans in the stands, the play element of sports recedes, and the work element grows larger. And when sports become “professional” (in some cases already in high school), then play is even further distorted: competition drives out communal pleasure, and profit replaces play for its own sake. The playground has become the workplace; the transcendent spirit shrinks to ticket sales.

I have provided only the briefest sketch of one activity of human activity that reveals “embodied spirit.” But the example of play shows us how much of what we do as humans is simply not addressed in Scripture, so that we need to look at actual human experience if we are to learn how God discloses Himself in even the most ordinary ways. It also illustrates the difference between approaching the body as a problem and as a mystery: play is not something for us to solve or fix; it is something from which, if we are attentive, we might learn.

Finally, it suggests a fruitful way of thinking about the stewardship of the body and spirit. The prevalence of play in all cultures suggests the deep longing that humans have for spiritual transcendence, for joining other bodies in coordinated yet free exchange, for good order, and for a “time out” from the grinding round of commerce and commodification. The predominance of sports in our culture suggests how much an idolatrous stance toward the body --- and the elimination of any consideration for spirit --- is distorting. Perhaps if churches recovered a sense of liturgy as play rather than work, and relearned a sense of Sabbath as a “time out” for taking pleasure in each other and in the Lord, then the delicate balance needed to be “embodied spirits” might be maintained.

The example of play illustrates the difference between approaching the body as a problem and as a mystery: play is not something for us to solve or fix; it is something from which, if we are attentive, we might learn.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Luke Timothy Johnson traces the roots of contemporary “idolization” of “body” to our habit of severing the always necessary connection of body with spirit. Consider your own experience: would you have to admit at times you live on a “merely” physical level with little thought of the spirit? On the other hand, do you at times also find yourself lamenting how your “bodiliness” drags down your spirit?
2. We not only “have” bodies but we “are” bodies. As Johnson puts it, we not only command bodies; they also command us. “Our bodies are mysteries to be celebrated and suffered.” Think of occasions in your life experience when your body “commanded attention.” What was your body trying to tell you?
3. Johnson speaks of “exegeting” (analyzing) the real life experience of our “embodied spirits,” that is, seeing God revealing Himself in our flesh. Think about your body right now: do you feel aches or pains anywhere? Hunger? Too full perhaps? What might God be saying to us through our body?
4. Distinguishing “play” from “sports,” Johnson suggests a greater attention to our bodies – at play. “Play” is “purposeless but meaningful;” it is a “time-out” from work or pursuit of profit. At play, we are clearly “embodied spirits.” When were you last engaged in “playful” activity? Did you feel close to the Lord?



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THE HOLINESS OF THE BODY

Timothy Radcliffe, OP



Dominicans have been celebrating the 800th anniversary of the foundation of the Order of Preachers. St. Dominic was moved, in part, to establish the Order because of his encounter with the Albigensians or Cathars and their hatred of the body. They believed that the material world was created by an evil god and that salvation was escape from this material creation. St. Thomas Aquinas, born just four years after the death of Dominic, gave a beautiful theological foundation to Dominic's central intuition, asserting the profound unity of body, soul and mind. Famously he said, 'I am not my soul.'

Ever since the beginning, Christianity has struggled against successive waves of dualism: Gnosticism, Manicheism, Albigensianism and even Descartes' identification of our humanity with our mind: 'I think therefore I am.' Our contemporaries are deeply ambiguous about the body. The perfect body, youthful and honed, is worshiped and those who tend to tubbiness like myself feel ashamed and many young people are afflicted with eating disorders. And yet, there is a contempt for the body. Sexual acts are often considered as recreational; they are merely bodily acts. The mind is what matters! In William Gibson's famous cyberpunk novel, *The Neuromancer*, 'the elite stance involved a certain relaxed contempt for the flesh. The body was meat.'

So let us celebrate this jubilee of the Dominican Order by proclaiming that our bodies are gifts from God. As Aquinas would have it, they are to be loved with the same love with which we love God. Fat or thin, healthy or sick, they are to be honoured and cherished. Jesus gave Himself to us on the night before he died saying: 'This is my body, given for you.' He reveals the deep beauty of bodily existence: a gift to be accepted and given away. The vulnerability, fidelity and generosity of this Eucharistic act are a good basis for a sexual ethics, as I have argued elsewhere.

Our bodily existence is not a prison to escape but a dwelling to be sanctified already now as it will be in the resurrection, even if we cannot begin to glimpse what that might mean. Dorothy Day wrote in her diary: 'But this aging flesh, I love it, I treat it tenderly, but also I rejoice that it has been well used. That was my vocation—a wife and mother, I gave myself to husband and children, my flesh well used, droops, my breasts sag, my face withers, but my eyes and lips rejoice and love and laugh with happiness.'

In Jesus, God became one of us, flesh of our flesh. But Genesis also says that we are made in God's image and likeness. In some sense our very bodiliness images God. Obviously not because God has eyes or ears but our human bodies somehow make visible the divine mystery of love. As William Blake, the early nineteenth century poet and painter said: 'Love, the human form divine, And Peace the human dress.' Dare I suggest that the human body evolved through hundreds of millions of years to be fit for the Incarnation of perfect love? The Anglican poet Thomas Traherne wrote:

'For God designs thy body, for His Sake,
A Temple of the Deity to make.'

The drama of our sanctification is rooted in our bodily nature. This grounds our relationships to each other. St. Thomas Aquinas loved to say, 'there is nothing in the mind which is not first in the senses.' *Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius in sensu*. The best poets know this. Dylan Thomas wrote: 'Every idea, intuitive or intellectual, can be imaged and translated in terms of the body, its flesh, skin, blood, sinews, veins, glands, organs, cells and senses. Through my small bone island I have learnt all I know, experienced all, and sensed all.' And so let us sketch briefly how our sanctification includes, among much else, the gracing of our bodily existence and all its senses.

THE EAR

Our relationship with God and each other is grounded in hearing. God hears the cries of the Hebrews in Egypt (Exodus 3.7) and comes to their aid. This open ear became flesh in Jesus who listened to the Samaritan woman at the well, and heard the cry of blind Bartimaeus by the roadside while the disciples told him to be quiet. He heard the voice of the Syrophenecian woman who begged for her child to be healed. Humanity's response to God also begins in hearing. Abraham hears God call him by name, as does Moses in the desert and Samuel in the Temple, once he discovered that it was not the voice of Eli the High Priest. Our holiness is rooted in the sanctification of our hearing.

Do we dare to listen either to God or to each other? Do 'conservatives' and 'liberals,' to use crude labels, hear each other? Do we listen to people of other generations? Hearing with an open ear is a tough spiritual discipline, demanding intelligence and imagination. Amos Oz's grandfather had this gift and grace: 'He did not just politely pretend to listen,

Our bodily existence is not a prison to escape but a dwelling to be sanctified already now as it will be in the resurrection.



while impatiently waiting for her to finish what she was saying and shut up. He did not break into his partner's sentence and finish it for her. He did not cut in to sum up what she was saying so as to move on to another subject. He did not let his interlocutress talk into thin air while he prepared in his head the reply that he would make when she finally finished. He did not pretend to be interested or entertained, he really was.' A good text for an examination of conscience!

The most profound listening is nourished by a deep interior silence. St. John of the Cross said: 'The Father spoke one Word, which was his Son, and this Word He always speaks in eternal silence, and in silence it must be heard by the soul.' We can diligently study the Scriptures, study great theologians and saints, scrutinise the teaching of the Magisterium, but if we do not repose in that silence tranquillity, we shall hear neither God nor our fellow

human beings. St. Augustine says that without this 'Sabbath in the heart' we shall be like the Egyptians tormented by gnats: 'These tiniest of flies, always restless, flying about aimlessly, swarm at your eyes, giving no rest. They are back as soon as you drive them off. Just like the futile fantasies that swarm in our minds.'

THE FACE

Jesus looked at people; he saw little Zacchaeus hidden in the tree where few would spot him; he saw Nathaniel under his fig tree, and the poor woman putting her tiny coins in the Temple treasury. He is God's face whose compassionate gaze penetrates our flimsy disguises and delights in us as we are: 'Let your face shine on us and we shall be saved.' (Psalm 80.3).

In the West we are forgetting how to look at each other. When I make way for people on the street or step aside, faces are averted, eye contact avoided. Francis Spufford perfectly captures this evasion in his novel *Golden Hill*, set in eighteenth century New York. She 'turned to face him, glancing as he spoke at his forehead, at his shoulders, at his chest – all around him, yet not quite at him... Her eyes kept up a flickering dance of avoidance, around and about his visage. He could almost feel it: a tickling, wary, dry, velvet-light attention, as if he were being visited by the scouts of a bee-swarm.'

Do we dare to look at people with an open face, and see their beauty and attractiveness, or their fragility and their scars? Do we look with delight and compassion but without possession? A human face may upset our plans and lead us where we had not intended to go. Brian Pierce OP, as a university student, visited Peru to perfect his Spanish. One day he was being driven through a poor village in the Andes, when an indigenous woman looked at him through the car window, begging for a coin. He was bowled over by her poverty. Before he could do anything, the car drove away and he regretted for ever that he never even touched her hand. Her face, with its dignity and suffering, is printed on his

memory forever. It was the beginning of his vocation as a Dominican. He wrote: 'On the surface I was overwhelmed, sick to my stomach, but deep in my being God was tilling the ground. Thanks be to God, I have seen that face and reached out to touch that hand many, many times. Today her face is a face of courage and dignity for me. Today I see her face as the face of God.'

It belongs to our discipleship that we learn to read the complexity of the human face and glimpse its layers. A couple of years ago I was being driven in the centre of Algeria by the Bishop of Oran, a brother Dominican, when we got caught up in a civil riot. They wanted to take hostages. Suddenly our car was surrounded by people with stones. Directly in front of us was a young man holding a stone over the windshield. His face was contorted by hatred, but under the hatred I could glimpse fear, and beneath the fear there was a hint of an ordinary kid out of his depth, a fellow child of God. I wonder if he glimpsed my humanity too?

TOUCH

In Michelangelo's depiction of the creation of Adam in the Sistine chapel, God reaches out to touch him into life. If the Holy Spirit is the breath of God, the Son is God's touch. Jesus touched all who needed healing, even if it made him impure in the sight of the Law, and he allowed himself to be touched, even by the woman who came and washed his feet with her tears and dried them with her hair.

St. Thomas Aquinas taught that touch is the most human of all the senses. All holy touch is mutual. One may see without being seen and hear without being heard but touch embodies the mutuality of our humanity, how we each give and receive being. This is why abusive or invasive touch is such a desecration of another's humanity. It belongs to our sanctification that we learn to touch lovingly, respectfully, with warmth but without imposition or possession.

The most sacred form of touch is the kiss: 'Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love

is better than wine.' (Song of Songs 1.2). Paul's letters to the Romans and the Corinthians end with the commandment to kiss each other with a holy kiss. It was the typical Christian greeting, probably going back to Jesus. The kiss of peace was an essential element of the reception of Christ's body, originally a full kiss on the mouth. It seems that some young men became overexcited and began to demand a second kiss, and undoubtedly some young women were sought for more than a liturgical gesture, and so it was dropped from the liturgy and an aspect of the incarnation was lost.

Even the formal liturgical monastic embrace of peace is a sacred touch. Dorothy Day, always sensitive to the corporeal, wrote in her diary: 'This morning when the kiss of peace was given, it was given deliberately, not a perfunctory, nor self-conscious embrace. The monk placed his hands on the shoulders of the monk to his right and bowing first, slightly, bent his cheek to the cheek of his brother monk so that they touched, so that human love and tenderness was expressed, sublimated by Christ's love. Mind, body and soul are all integrated in such worship.'

How can we recover holy touch, especially after the horrible scandals of sexual abuse that have so discredited the Church? Now we fear to touch. And yet God still reaches out to touch us in discreet ways. Mother Theresa of Calcutta once told a suffering woman that 'this terrible pain is only the kiss of Jesus — a sign that you have come so close to Jesus on the cross that he can kiss you.' The woman replied, 'Mother Teresa, please tell Jesus to stop kissing me!'

THE FOOT

The human foot may not be the most beautiful part of the body, but it embodies our vocation to walk. The psalmist prays: 'Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.' (25.4). God summoned Abraham and Moses to take the way to the Promised Land, and God became human in a person who



walked around Galilee and finally 'set his face to go to Jerusalem' (Luke 9.51). On the night before he died, he washed the tired and dirty feet of his disciples, the sign of his love.

The first name of Christianity is 'the way' (Acts 9.2). Christians are wayfarers, and so we need to help each other to our feet and hobble on the way. The journey to the Kingdom for our Pilgrim Church today seems to be especially painful for some, like wandering for forty years in the wilderness after the Exodus from Egypt. Pope Francis invites us to keep on walking. For most, there is the excitement of the journey, but for others, the pain of uncertainty, a loss of security. Can we help each other to keep on walking, caring for each other's feet, understanding each other's joy and hurt?

The name of the first Native American saint, Tekakwitha, means roughly 'the one who walks groping her way', a good patron for the Church today in this time which is joyful for some of us but difficult for others. But walk we must. The Lord is ahead of us. At the end of Mark's gospel, when the disciples might have expected to reach the place of rest, the angel at the tomb says: 'Go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him as he told you.' (Mark 16.7).

Today there are 65 million forcibly displaced people, evicted from their homes, and seeking an abode: walking, hitching, swimming in the hope of home. Shannon Jensen flew to South Sudan in May 2012, to report on the plight of refugees fleeing persecution in Sudan. How could she communicate their suffering to people tired with compassion fatigue? Then she noticed their shoes: 'there was a huge diversity of shapes and colours, many of them showed a huge amount of wear that paid testament to the arduousness of their journey, the trek they had made. Many of them had these small repairs, stitches, pieces of melted plastic that paid testament to the determination, the persistence necessary to get through, to get to safety.' May we wash their feet and welcome them home.

MORTALITY

There are many other aspects of the sanctification of our bodies on which we could meditate if there was the space. Above all the mouth, and our breathing, the pulse of life and prayer; smell, the most evocative of all senses, to which Dorothy Day was especially sensitive, a source of suffering and of joy. But we must conclude with the briefest word on the death of the body. To be bodily is to be mortal.

This year I have had a couple of operations for cancer



and I had the blessing of encountering my own mortality. In the West, we often hide from it.

In Abraham Verghese's novel *Cutting for Stone*, the hero says: 'It was as if in Ethiopia, and even in Nairobi, people assumed that all illness – even a trivial or imagined one – was fatal; they expected death. The news to convey in Africa was that you'd kept death at bay...In America, my initial impression

was that death or the possibility of it always seemed to come as a surprise, as if we took it for granted that we were immortal, and that death was just an option.' Now I have discovered more deeply than ever, that life is a gift. I am suspended over nothing. Denys Turner wrote: 'Between my existence and my nothingness there is nothing but the divine love.'

Thanks be to God!

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Quoting St. Thomas Aquinas, Fr. Radcliffe states, "There is nothing in the mind which is not first in the senses." Try that insight on for size: think of how some physical experience (for example, childbirth or an illness or an operation) brought you new insight into God or yourself. Conversely try to trace a concept or insight backwards to its "origin" in a concrete sensual experience (ex. separation and return as a metaphor for Death-Resurrection might be traced to letting go of a loved one for a time or experiencing the ebb and flow of water at the seashore).
2. Fr. Radcliffe especially emphasized the sense of touch, even saying Jesus was the "touch" of God: He touched people and they touched Him. Yet touch is a very delicate matter in today's society. Meditate on ways you might use touch in a gentle, affirming, non-controlling way.

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Timothy Radcliffe OP joined the English Province of the Dominican Order in 1965, and was ordained a priest in 1971. In 1992 he was elected Master of the Dominican Order, finishing his term in 2001. He is now an itinerant preacher and lecturer, based at Blackfriars, Oxford, spending two thirds of the year traveling. He is the author of *Sing a New Song*, *I Call You Friends*, *Seven Last Words*, *What is the point of being a Christian?*, ed. *Just One Year*, *Why go to church?* The drama of the Eucharist, which was commissioned by the Archbishop of Canterbury as his Lent book for 2009, and most recently *Take the Plunge: living Baptism and Confirmation* and *The Stations of the Cross*.



WITH THE SCARS TO PROVE IT

STAYING HEALTHY IN TIMES OF CHALLENGE AND TRANSITION

John Celichowski, OFM Cap.



A DAILY REMINDER

It is there every morning as I stand before the bathroom mirror to shave; the 9-inch scar that runs from the top of my sternum to just above my diaphragm. It is there whenever I sit in our chapel or another quiet room: the clicking sound of a mechanical heart valve. Each day gives me visual and aural reminders of the open heart surgery I had on December 1, 2015.

I had known since I was a child that I had a heart murmur and by my late teens I had known the name of the condition that caused it: bicuspid aortic stenosis, a progressive degradation of the valve that helps to provide oxygenated blood to the rest of the body. The condition had not caused me much worry for decades. In fact, I had been able to play a variety of sports in elementary school before finding and settling on distance running in high school and college. I had been able to run five marathons, achieving a personal best of 2:30.

So when I started to experience difficulty completing what had been pretty routine workouts during a brief sabbatical in fall 2014, I shrugged it off as just one of the effects of middle age. Several months later, when I found myself dizzy and short of breath less than a mile into a routine morning run, I rationalized it as simply having a bad day. I paused, leaned against a wall, caught my breath, and finished the run without incident. When something similar happened a month later, I finally concluded it was time to see a doctor for a check-up.

Whether it was mere inertia or a more deep-seated fear of what the doctor would tell me, it took several more months for me to make the appointment for that check-up. When I finally met with my new primary care physician and shared my medical history along with the more recent problems I had had, he referred me to a cardiologist. Additional tests revealed what I suspected but didn't want to hear: my aortic valve needed to be replaced. It was both pumping less blood than it should and allowing some to leak back into the heart. So at age 53 I had open heart surgery and was given a mechanical valve. I was fortunate to have an excellent thoracic surgeon who had been doing such surgery for decades.

While it is common and generally safe, open heart surgery is still traumatic. It includes a long incision, cracking the sternum and spreading the ribcage, stopping the heart and putting the body on a heart-lung machine, replacing the defective valve with the new one, restarting the heart and sewing everything up again. When I woke up from the 5-hour procedure I felt as if I had been run over by a truck. When they first tried to get me up to walk

my heart went into arrhythmia and it took additional procedures and medications to get me stabilized.

Within several days, however, I was able to get out of bed and walk the halls of the cardiac care unit and a little more than a week after the surgery I was able to leave the hospital. I was on the road to recovery but it proved to be a bumpy road.

I started and then had to stop my cardiac rehabilitation. Over the next three or four months I was hospitalized twice for a persistent infection along the incision line and just above my sternum. I made three trips to the emergency room and was hospitalized twice. I had to undergo an additional procedure to cut away the infected area and then spent three weeks attached to a wound vac (a negative pressure device used to promote healing) and had to take numerous antibiotics, the last of which I self-administered intravenously three times a day for a month. I did a lot of walking and sometimes doubted if I would be able to run again.

Finally, however, in April 2015 I was given the clearance to start jogging again. It was a rough and humbling start. I could go barely a mile before I had to walk for a minute or two and catch my breath. My pace was painfully slow. In my first race, a local 5K, I had to stop and walk five or six times. But I finished. Two months later, in another 5K, I again got winded and had to stop and walk three or four times. It was embarrassing, but I also knew it was the sensible thing to do; and I finished.

A month after that, I ran another 5K race. This time I finished nearly three minutes faster, and I did not have to stop at all. Since then I've finished a 10K and fulfilled a "bucket list" dream of running a race on the famed Route 66.

God's grace appears more abundant as I try to live more mindfully. When I resist the temptation to multi-task or live in reaction to my anxieties, my sense of God's presence and action continue to grow.



There have been more profound rewards. After 40 years of running, I am listening to my body in a new and healthier way. I am running and working out more mindfully. I notice people and things that I would have missed in years past. I am more conscious of how my body moves and, at age 54, how it does not quite move as it did before! I stretch more and practice deep breathing. Most of all, I am grateful.

Every morning I have a chance to go out—whether it is 70 degrees and the sun is rising or it is 10 with snow flurries—I run with all the doctors and nurses, friends and family members, and all of my Capuchin brothers who cared, prayed, visited, drove, encouraged and otherwise helped me. They were and are all signs of God’s love and goodness. When I finish a run and say, “Thank you, Jesus,” it is an expression of joy as well as relief.

Life will never be the way it was. I wear a medical alert bracelet. I have to take warfarin, an anticoagulant, every day and have my blood regularly tested for the rest of my life. Because of the medication I have to watch my diet more carefully and avoid foods that I enjoyed for years. I need to be particularly careful about avoiding cuts, falls and infections. I cannot work 10 and 12 hour days like I used to. I need more sleep. I may never run another marathon or even a half marathon.

But I am very much alive. Through the gifts of medical science and technology, God has given me more time to serve him and his people here on Earth. In addition, the Lord has reinforced a few lessons that I began to learn earlier in my life and ministry:

- **God’s grace is more powerful than even my pride, stubbornness and stupidity.** My thoracic surgeon told my brother that when he actually saw my aortic valve during the surgery, it was worse than he anticipated. That persistent infection was centered right over my heart but never quite reached it.



- **God’s grace works through my surrender.** Undergoing major surgery at a time when it was not expected challenged me to develop a deeper patience, acceptance and flexibility. I had to let go of control in some ways and assert it in others. I could no longer “burn the candle at both ends” and had to learn how to pace myself. I could no longer eat whatever I wanted whenever I wanted and just assume I could “run it off.” I had to learn how to accept help not so much as a concession to my mortality but rather as a sign of God’s compassion.
- **God’s grace appears more abundant as I try to live more mindfully.** When I resist the temptation to multi-task or live in reaction to my anxieties, my sense of God’s presence and action continue to grow.
- **God’s grace works through people, if I accept it.** It is not easy to wrap my mind around how many people—from our Province’s Wellness Director and Health Benefits Manager to the dozens of doctors, nurses, CNA’s, interns,

pharmacists and other healthcare professionals, from the people at the parishes, schools and convents where I celebrate Mass to my brothers and sisters who kept up on my progress via text message and e-mail—have been such a great support through this process.

- **God's grace is made far more effective with hard work.** As much as I relied on God and the support and skill of others, I was still the one who had to make the cardio rehab sessions, get outside for those cold early morning walks, carry and sleep with the wound vac, administer the IV antibiotics, and maintain to the best of my abilities my commitments to the ministries that the Province and Church had entrusted to me. I was a little self-conscious sitting through community prayers and formation meetings with the gurgling sound of the wound vac but people

understood and, at a time of strained personnel, they were grateful that I could do as much as I did.

PROVINCIAL LEADERSHIP—THICK SKIN, OPEN HEART

I was first elected to serve on our Provincial Council at age 39. I had been perpetually professed for ten years and had several years of pastoral experience, first in parish on Chicago's South Side and then at a parish and community meal program in downtown Milwaukee. In between those assignments I had obtained a law degree from Georgetown University.

My first couple years in the parish and at the meal program were exciting. Both ministries had experienced and dedicated staff members and volunteers, every day was different, and our

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Capuchin community lived on site, so we were well-integrated into all the activities and could use them as the grist for our daily prayers and our conversations over meals or drinks at the end of the day. I was admitted to the Wisconsin Bar and was able to engage in some part-time legal practice, mainly assisting guests of our meal program with landlord-tenant, consumer and similar matters.

LIFE GOT MORE COMPLICATED WHEN I WAS ELECTED TO PROVINCIAL LEADERSHIP

Our Provincial Chapter in June 2002 took place in the growing shadows of the sexual abuse crisis and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB's) approval of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and the accompanying Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons. Later that summer, the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM) met for their annual assembly and initiated the process that would eventually lead to the establishment of their Instruments of Hope and Healing program and their collaboration with Praesidium Religious Services.

In addition to the ordinary challenges that face the leadership of any religious community today— attracting and nurturing vocations, strengthening fraternal life, caring for elderly members, ministerial planning, financial management, and trying to meet our ministerial commitments —our Provincial Minister and Council faced the additional task of responding to and implementing the Charter and Norms and Instruments of Hope and Healing.

Fortunately and primarily due to a scandal that had erupted in the province a decade prior to the bishops' meeting in Dallas, we already had some policies and processes in place. We were thus able to build on the work of those who had gone before us, but the work of responding to what the USCCB and CMSM had done was considerable and I accepted much of it. However, the work of developing and implementing

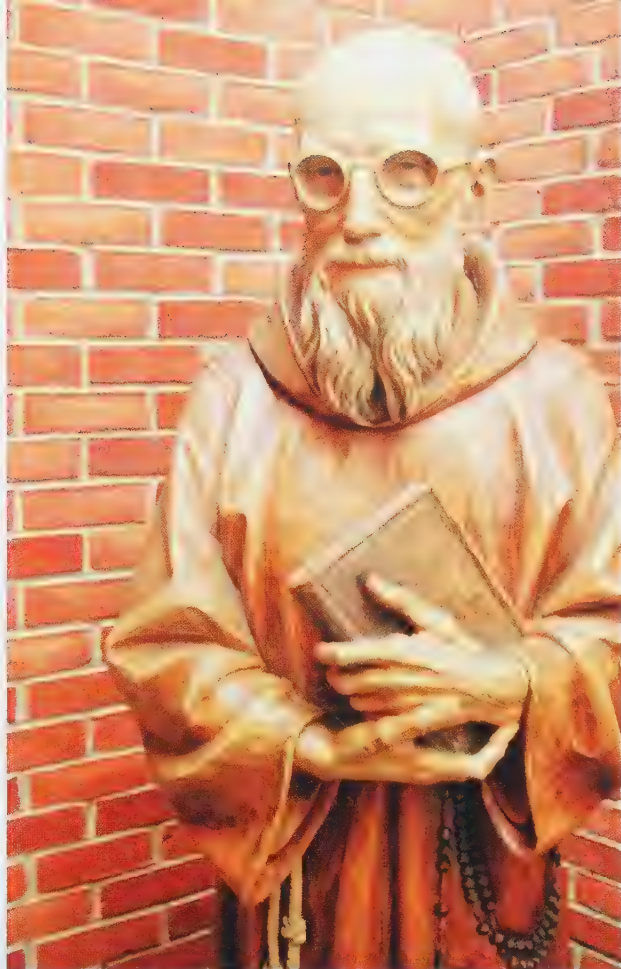
new policies and addressing the needs of victims/ survivors and developing, implementing and enforcing policies on the supervision of those who had been removed from ministry was emotionally taxing as well as time-consuming.

During this time I also made the transition from ministry at the downtown parish and meal program in Milwaukee to serving as Pastor of a parish on the city's North Side. It was a great blessing to be able to serve in the parish, which had lively worship, a good spirit of volunteerism and a nice array of programs from youth ministry to a food pantry. The staff members were also generous with their time. Even though we did not have a lot of paid positions, we got a lot done. While every parish has its challenges and moments of "drama" or difficulty, it was a joy to minister there.

THEN, SUDDENLY, IT ENDED

I went to our Provincial Chapter in 2008 fully expecting our Provincial Minister to be re-elected. I was quite shocked, then, to find my name at the top of the list after the first ballot. During the break, one of our friars, someone I deeply respected and who had served on several provincial councils over the years, came up to me and said, "Congratulations, you poor thing!" I hoped he was joking. After we had the second ballot and I was elected, another brother, one who had served two terms as Provincial Minister before I entered the Order, told me that he would pray for me. Then he added, "I hope you have a thick skin." I quickly learned to develop one.

On the drive back to Milwaukee, I started to come to terms with what had happened and, even more, what it would mean: I would have to leave a parish and a community I really loved, as well as the city where I grew up and still had family, and move to Detroit. The parishioners and I shed a lot of tears that weekend, and over the next month I steadily withdrew from my responsibilities there and handed them off to another friar who himself would have to leave a parish he loved and to which he had dedicated over 20 years.



Over the course of the next few months, I invested a lot of time and energy in learning what it meant to be a religious superior or in our Capuchin argot, a Provincial Minister. Although the previous six years of service on our Provincial Council had given me some sense of what the work entailed, it was different to be in “the chair” and to be expected to make all kinds of decisions. Many of them were routine, and I was fortunate to have an excellent and experienced Administrative Assistant. I came to joke that she was the “shadow provincial,” keeping the machinery of the Province humming and taking care of many details while I was away. We had a great working relationship, and it was buoyed by the fact that she understood her service as a genuine ministry. In addition, I had the opportunity to work with an entire staff of people at our Provincialate who were not only dedicated to their work but really understood our mission, too.

One of the benefits of being in provincial leadership was regularly traveling to the different parts of

our Province and missions. For the most part, I enjoyed visitations, especially because it gave me the opportunity to get to know the brothers a little better. It gave me a greater insight and a deeper sense of gratitude for all that they had done and were doing for God’s people and the Capuchin Order.

I also had the privilege of presiding at and participating in some of the milestone moments of our religious life: welcoming our postulants, investing our novices, receiving the first, renewed and perpetual vows of our brothers, concelebrating at ordinations, celebrating jubilees and many funerals.

As Provincial Minister, my workload and travel increased significantly. I became intimately acquainted with many airports, especially DTW. In addition to all of our local ministers (guardians), I had at least a dozen other ministry directors and department heads who reported directly to me. It was not unusual for me to respond to dozens of e-mail messages a day, in addition to telephone calls. (I resisted getting a smart phone until about a year left in my term, so I was spared a lot of text messages.)

I also participated in many meetings—an experience that was often engaging and penitential at the same time. Sometimes they were very productive or uplifting. Sometimes they were boring, ineffective or depressing. Provincial Council meetings were a particular challenge.

Over those six years I was very blessed to have two groups of dedicated, talented and generous council members, joined by our CFO and our Director of Human Resources and Provincial Ministries. Although it was not always easy and did not always happen, we were able to come to consensus on many things, including some very difficult decisions such as our decision to let go of two retreat centers that our province had sponsored for decades. One closed and the other was handed over to a local group that loves the ministry and continues to operate it—in some respects better than we ever did.

But by far the most difficult and painful part of being Provincial Minister was dealing with personnel—the brothers. Interestingly if not ironically, it was also one of the things that had brought me the greatest joy. Mediating and trying to resolve conflicts in communities and ministries; confronting friars with addictive and compulsive behaviors that were hurting them, their brothers and the people they served; telling elder friars they could no longer drive; asking friars to move and take on a new ministry only to be told that they had discerned that they could not (or would not) accept it; placing friars on administrative leave and sometimes restricting or removing them from ministry for health reasons or for sexual, financial and other misconduct; and, on rare occasions, directing a brother to do something under obedience....

It was sometimes emotionally, psychologically, spiritually and even physically exhausting. There were days that ended with me alone in a chair, weeping. There were nights when I could not sleep. There were mornings when I went out for a morning run and relied on habit and spiritual fumes to get me through. Near the end of my second term, I returned to see a counselor for several months.

WHAT I LEARNED FROM THE EXPERIENCE

- **God's grace is more powerful than even my pride, stubbornness and stupidity.** There were times during the course of my time in provincial leadership when I felt diminished, embarrassed or simply overwhelmed. Interventions that I hoped would be helpful were greeted with indifference or hostility. Sometimes the temptation to engage in a battle of wills and to “win” was hard to resist. Ideas that I thought would work or would inspire others did not. Yet somehow, some way, many good and necessary things were accomplished, we continued to be blessed with vocations, and I left office perhaps a little battered but not bitter.
- **God's grace works through my surrender.** I needed to put my ego out of the way and to begin by accepting people and situations as they were and not how I expected, wanted or demanded them to be. This was especially true in dealing with my brothers in personnel-related matters. The first choice for a particular ministry was not always the best one and a friar's rejection or deferment of a ministry or community could force us to “think outside the box” and find someone who proved to be an even better fit.
- **God's grace appears more abundant as I try to live more mindfully.** Provincial Council meetings can get to be a grind, and after a meeting of particularly tough decisions or issues, it was very tempting to become cynical or to rely on “gallows humor” or even jokes at the expense of others to make it to the end. I found that the best antidote to that kind of poisonous thinking was to consciously look for the good in people and situations. Another essential thing was to bring those people and situations to prayer. I began the practice of creating a personal list of prayer intentions that I kept in my wallet. I still do it today.
- **God's grace works through people, if I accept it.** Early in my time in provincial leadership, I read an article on healthy and happy priests. Among other things it noted that these men typically had strong prayer lives and regularly availed themselves of spiritual direction and the Sacrament of Penance. I was very blessed to have the assistance of an excellent counselor, a wise and experienced spiritual director and some very compassionate confessors. They helped me get through a lot. In addition, I had the privilege of serving with talented, supportive and honest friars and lay partners in ministry who weren't afraid to speak their minds and even express disagreement, disappointment or skepticism but whose personal support I could always count on.



- **God's grace is made far more effective with hard work.** God makes the plants and flowers grow, but it doesn't hurt to cultivate the soil, plant, fertilize, weed, water, prune, fertilize and harvest as needed. Serving in leadership demands hard work—planting seeds that may not bear fruit for a while or may not grow at all; cultivating soil that may be exhausted and may need to rest; putting up with “B.S.” from time to time; getting to the roots of problems; discarding some things so that others may grow; and always giving thanks for what God can do.

FORMATION LEADERSHIP—A LOT TO LEARN

I came into the ministry of initial and continuing formation in part by intent (someone else's) and

in part by accident. In the final weeks of my second term as Provincial Minister, I wrote a letter addressed to my successor. It confirmed that I had been approved for a six-month sabbatical, and it also expressed my willingness to do whatever ministry he needed me to do. There were several needs, of course, that I was already aware of and I listed them. One of those needs—the one that I least favored—was to work in initial formation. After six years in the “internal ministry” of provincial leadership, I really hoped that I would have the opportunity to work in one of our parishes or missions.

It was not to be. In fact, I learned from the friar who followed me as Provincial Minister that he and two other likely candidates had decided (conspired?) before the Chapter that I would be assigned to serve as part of our Post-Novitiate team in Chicago. This

would mean living and working with our brothers who were undergraduate and graduate (seminary) students.

I was disappointed. I had never before done or been trained for formation work and I was not sure that I really had the aptitude for it or could work well with a younger generation. Still, I readily accepted the assignment in a spirit of obedience and trusted that with God's help and the support and guidance of some of my brothers already in this critical ministry that all would work out.

Although my colleagues and our friars in Post-Novitiate and Ministry Formation may be better judges than me, nearly three years later, things seem to be working out, even as I have also undertaken the roles of Provincial Director of Initial Formation and Director of Continuing Formation—essentially becoming what I sometimes kiddingly refer to as the “Formation Czar.”

One of the graces that I have received from serving in this ministry is a deeper appreciation of something that we as religious and priests can readily acknowledge but that is not always reflected in our own lives: formation never ends! The Capuchin Constitutions (42) put it this way:

Ongoing formation is intended for all the brothers, since it is nothing other than a continuous development of our vocation. Therefore, without a doubt and above all else, it is the duty and right of each brother to apply himself to his own ongoing formation. All the ministers and guardians shall regard it as their primary and ordinary duty of their pastoral service to promote the ongoing formation of the brothers entrusted to them. In particular, the same ministers and others responsible for formation shall take care to develop in those admitted to the Order the conviction that they must attend to their own formation for the whole of their lives, for no brother who has finished initial formation can claim to be fully equipped for the rest of his life.

I am still learning...and since I can be a slow learner

I continue to see that:

- **God's grace is more powerful than even my pride, stubbornness and stupidity.** As a formation director who is old enough to be the father of most of our brothers in initial formation, I can easily feel insecure and out of touch. I do not always “get” some of the ways that many Millennials think. Some of their cultural reference points are beyond me, and some of mine must seem prehistoric to them. I sometimes must remind myself that forming them does not mean doing so in my image or according to some of my expectations (e.g. why we should not be praying Morning Prayer at 7 a.m. year-round rather than just during the academic year).
- **God's grace works through my surrender.** One time, one of our simply professed brothers in a formation meeting confronted me about my periodic reflection that I found it hard at times to be in formation ministry. He interpreted that as saying I did not want to be there. That was hard to hear, but I needed to listen. Even though my intent in sharing my struggle was to help my younger brothers understand that obedience sometimes means we do not get to do what we want or prefer, I had to reflect on the difference between the message I wanted to give and the one that I was apparently delivering.
- **God's grace appears more abundant as I try to live more mindfully.** One of the things that I try to do as a spiritual practice is to spend my last waking moments going through the day that has ended and recalling all the people, things and experiences for which I am grateful. The more I do this, the more I find myself giving thanks throughout the day and the more I can see God's grace. It's everywhere!
- **God's grace works through people, if I accept it.** No matter how many jobs or titles one has, formation is still very much a team ministry. There are several brothers on our Formation

Council who have years or even decades more experience than I do, and they are very generous in sharing their experiences and insights. In addition, I am fortunate enough to have a couple of formators living in the same city, and they share perspectives on people and situations that I can easily miss and they have a style of ministering that helps to smooth some of my rough edges.

- **God's grace is made far more effective with hard work.** While I sometimes feel as if I am trying to build, ride and repair the bicycle at the same time, I rarely find it hard to get out of bed in the morning. Each day, after I shut off the alarm and stretch out of my slumber, I say the Serenity Prayer and the Glory Be. They remind me that the daily opportunity to live and minister well is made fruitful by acceptance, courage and wisdom.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Fr. Celichowski has shared with us an intensely humble and transparent "autobiography of God's grace" carrying him along through physical challenges and the pains that go with community leadership and the ministry of formation. Might I take the time to write my own "autobiography of God's grace" and note the times and ways God "used" me - often against my own wishes?
2. Three times in his essay Fr. John recites the same "lessons" learned about God's grace:
 - It is more powerful than my pride
 - Works through my surrender
 - Appears more abundant as I live mindfully
 - Works through people if I accept it
 - Is far more effective with hard work.
3. Which of these does my own experience most resonate?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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THE BODY AS AN INSTRUMENT OF PRAYER

Dr. Tom Petriano



"When I love God, I love the beauty of bodies, the rhythm of movements, the shining of eyes, the embraces, the feelings, the scents, the sounds of all this protean creation. When I love you, my God, I want to embrace it all, for I love you with all my senses in the creations of your love. In all the things that encounter me, you are waiting for me." (Jurgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 1985, pg. 331)

Can the body be an instrument of prayer? The traditional definition of prayer that most of us can recite from memory is, "prayer is lifting the mind and heart to God." The more recent Catechism of the Catholic Church states, "Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God." There is little reference to the body in these definitions of prayer.

Perhaps this is because of the long standing ambivalence that Christianity has had toward the human body, and the general disparagement of embodiment since the time of the Reformation. This tension has been famously depicted in Pieter Bruegel's "The Fight Between Carnival and Lent."

Bruegel's painting depicts a busy town square where on the left side we see Mardi Gras revelers and on the right side, penitential Christians observing the strict fast of Lent. According to historian Peter Burke, (*Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, 1978) the joust between a portly reveler and a gaunt penitent which occupies the foreground of the painting represents the opposition between the sacred and the secular and the bodily and the spiritual that characterized Reformation and Post-Reformation spirituality. He reminds us that early and medieval Christianity had a more holistic spirituality, one that much more unabashedly incorporated the material and bodily into religious ritual without clear oppositions between spirit and body. Although it is not clear who won the conflict between Carnival and Lent in Bruegel's painting, it would seem that Christian spirituality and ritual have largely neglected or, at least, marginalized the role of the material and bodily dimensions of prayer. A renewed appreciation of these dimensions and ways of incorporating them into prayer could certainly help retrieve a lost dimension of Christian spirituality and also expand the myriad of ways that one can encounter, worship and praise the living God.

BODY AT PRAYER IN VARIOUS TRADITIONS

The recognition of the place of the body in prayer is by no means restricted to early and medieval Christian practices. One can find it present in many religious traditions. For example, in Hinduism, yoga has since its inception been seen as a spiritual practice that incorporates mindful breathing and posture. It developed as a way of satisfying the human desire to connect with the divine. Indeed, the Sanskrit word yoga means to yoke, join, or connect. Though the authentic spiritual dimension of yoga is not often realized by those who see it as false worship nor those who flock to health clubs to practice it for its physical benefits, the yogis who practiced understood well the connection between the body and the spirit. As Thomas Ryan points out in his book, *Reclaiming the Body in Christian Spirituality*:

I propose that yoga is the one place in the culture where the natural, human thirst for contact with God is being satisfied, even if such participants would never use such language. And it is happening there because it is in the body, first and foremost, that God comes.

A recent conversation with a colleague about the impact of a yoga class in which she had participated reminded me of exactly this connection. She related how the yoga instructor invited the class to be mindful of the various poses they were practicing, e.g., Crow Pose, Downward Facing Dog, Eagle Pose,

Breath is at once something physical and also non-material. As such it can be a reminder of the importance of not creating a binary opposition between the material and the spiritual when we pray.

Child Pose, and while in the poses to experience their oneness with the subject of the pose. The instructor pointed out that as one does these poses, the practitioner is actually recognizing their connection with all living things. While some might dismiss this as yet one more example of a misguided New Age pantheism, the instructor was tapping into an ancient wisdom about the body as a locus for spiritual experience, in a way that seems very consistent with Christian belief in the Word that became flesh.

The significance of breath and breathing to the practice of yoga is significant. Breathing is essential to the postures and also to meditation. In Sanskrit the word is pranayama, prana being the word for breath or life force. In Patanjali's famous Yoga Sutras, it is the fourth of the eight limbs of yoga. It is hardly a coincidence that in Hebrew the word for breath is ruah and it is the same word for spirit, the word used in Genesis 1 for the "spirit" that hovered over the chaos. Breath is at once something physical and also non-material. As such it can be a reminder of the importance of not creating a binary opposition between the material and the spiritual when we pray. Can we imagine breathing itself as a prayer? Richard Rohr reminds us that the name "Yahweh" was not spoken but rather breathed, a beautiful example of how in our very act of breathing, we are indeed praying.

It is not only Hinduism that offers us an example of the integral connection between body and spirit. Posture and bodily movement are central to Jewish prayer, especially the Eighteen Blessings known as Amidah, which is the word for "standing." The prayers involve a series of movements that include stepping forward and backward, bowing and sometimes rocking back and forth. The rocking movement is known as schuckling, from the Yiddish verb, shokel, meaning to sway. There are several interpretations of the precise meaning of this practice, but perhaps most interesting is the one that comes from the tradition of the Kabbalah, where the human body has certain energy centers much like



the chakras in the Hindu tradition. Different parts of the body correspond to different spiritual qualities. (J. Philip Newell, *Echo of the Soul: The Sacredness of the Human Body*, 2000). This use of the body in prayer is deeply rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures where we find passages, like "Taste and see the goodness of the Lord" (Ps. 34:8); "O clap your hands, all peoples; shout to God with the voice of joy" (ps. 47:1); "Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre" (Ps. 149:3). In 2 Samuel 6:6, we find David "leaping and dancing before the Lord." In these examples, and others, we see clearly the important role that the body plays in the experience of authentic prayer. Undoubtedly based on the same recognition of the relationship between the body and prayer, we find a similar approach in Islamic prayer.

For Muslims, the practice of praying five times daily is an obligation of their faith. Salat (salah) is the Arabic word for prayer. It is derived from the word selah, which is the word for relationship, and it is the word for the prayer times that correspond to



different hours of the day, each of which incorporates a significant amount of bodily movement. The bodily activity begins with the ablutions (wudu) that are required before praying. These ablutions involve washing one's hands, face, feet, arms, mouth, and nostrils. This prescription comes from the Qur'an Surah 5:6. Ablutions are followed by prescribed movements known to Muslims as *rakat*, which involve a very carefully choreographed sequence of movements. These movements begin with standing and covering one's ears, followed by bowing, sitting, and prostrating, repeated various times, depending on the time of day.

In addition to praying five times daily, Muslims are required to fast throughout the month of Ramadan. Fasting is another physical, bodily activity that involves the physical sensation of hunger. Yet another of the five pillars, *hajj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca that Muslims are required to make once in a lifetime, also involves a number of physical actions. These actions

include circumambulating the Kabah seven times, a ritual gathering of pebbles and stoning of three pillars representing the devil, and the cutting of one's hair. Thus in many ways, Islamic prayer and ritual incorporates bodily movement and gives recognition to the important role of the body in prayer.

Something similar can be observed in the Orthodox practice of bowing, where there exist a number of different kinds of prescribed bows. *Poyasny* is a waist bow and *zemnoy poklo* is a full prostration and there are strict rules about which bows are to be used on specific occasions. Another common Orthodox practice that accompanies prayer is *metania* which involves bowing toward the floor and extending one's right hand open and touching the ground. This gesture is performed when venerating an icon along with the act of kissing the icon and lighting a candle before it. The very act of creating an icon is itself an act of prayer. And so in the Orthodox tradition, we find yet another example of how integral bodily action is to prayer. This relationship was not lost on St. Ignatius of Loyola for whom the five senses were a very important part of the Spiritual Exercises.

IGNATIAN APPLICATION OF THE SENSES

In Week 2, Contemplation 5 of The Spiritual Exercises we find what is referred to in Ignatian spirituality as the "application of the senses." Ignatius instructs the retreatant as follows:

"It is helpful to pass the five senses of the imagination through . . . contemplation, in the following way: The first point is to see the persons with the sight of the imagination, meditating and contemplating in particular the details about them. . . . The second, to hear with the hearing what they are, or might be, talking about. . . . The third [and fourth], to smell and to taste. . . . The [fifth], to touch with the touch, as for instance . . . the places where such persons put their feet and sit, always seeing to my drawing profit from it." (Spiritual Exercises, 121)

Joseph Tetlow, S.J., in commenting on this section observes that "Ignatian contemplation is never an

out of body experience” (ignatianspirituality.com)

In section 124, the retreatant is invited to “smell the infinite fragrance and taste the infinite sweetness of the divinity.” In this section of the Spiritual Exercises we are reminded that the five senses are a powerful way to encounter the living God. In her wonderful book about praying with the senses, Ginny Kubitz Moyer suggests very specific ways in which all of our senses can become involved in the experience of prayer. In one section she talks about how roses appeal to multiple senses and present themselves to us as “autographs from the hand of God.” Incense, candle smoke, the “odor of the sheep,” the smell of lavender, and the background noises that make up our day all present sacramental occasions through which we can encounter God. (Taste and See: Experiencing the Goodness of God Through Our Five Senses)

An insight of C.S. Lewis in *The Screwtape Letters* can also be instructive. In counseling his nephew Wormwood on how to draw his “patient” away from the “enemy,” Uncle Screwtape offers the following advice:

At the very least, they can be persuaded that the bodily position makes no difference to their prayers; for they constantly forget, what you must always remember, that they are animals and that whatever their bodies do affects their souls. (Screwtape Letters, Macmillan, pg. 20)

“Whatever their bodies do affects their souls.” What a marvelous insight Lewis offers us here into the connection between the body and the soul! It is no accident that Lewis was himself a medievalist, and, as such, thoroughly acquainted with the spirituality of the Middle Ages where there existed a much more holistic sense of the importance of embodiment. Examples of this can be found in the writings and practices of Julian of Norwich, Hildegard of Bingen, or St. Francis of Assisi.

PRAYING – LITERALLY – “ON THE RUN!”

These insights from Christianity, and other religious

traditions, can help expand our notion of prayer, making it more integrated with our whole self. The body can become a privileged place for experiencing the loving and healing presence of God. There is a line in the movie *Chariots of Fire* (1981) that illustrates quite effectively how the body can be an instrument of prayer. At one point Eric Liddel, an Olympic runner and a devout Christian, is being chastised by his sister for putting his devotion to running before his devotion to God. In a classic line from the movie, he replies to her, “I believe God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast. And when I run I feel His pleasure.” Liddel realizes that his running is in fact an act of devotion and prayer because he is doing what God created him to do, and in doing it he is in fact praising God.

Liddel’s response shows a very concrete way in which the body can give praise to God. Our bodies are the expressions of our souls and our senses can be instruments of prayer. Touch, for example, can be a powerful aid to prayer, but it need not be just the feel of rosary beads passing through our fingers, oil anointing our bodies or the water with which we bless ourselves. Feeling the air, the grass, or the sand as we walk, or a caring touch when done intentionally can also be ways of experiencing the presence of God.

“Finding God in all things” is the First Principle and Foundation of the Spiritual Exercises. Sensuality and sexuality as part of our experience of embodiment are therefore also aspects of our humanity through which and in which we encounter the living God. As Jane Vennard points out in *Praying with Body and Soul*, it is striking that words often used to describe sexual intimacy are also words used by many of the mystics. Words like ecstasy, surrender, vulnerability, joy, and union occur frequently in the writings of the mystics, and the *Song of Songs*, the book of the Bible about which more commentaries were written than any other book, contains similar language. The sense of touch in all its varied dimensions can be a powerful and beautiful form of prayer. Another important issue that emerges from this discussion

of the role of physicality in prayer is the place of the disfigured and suffering human body in prayer. To this issue we now turn our attention.

There is a story of a rather dramatic encounter that took place in November 2013 between Pope Francis and an Italian man Vinicio Riva who is severely disfigured by a disease known as neurofibromatosis. During a general audience Pope Francis embraced Vinicio in a way reminiscent of St. Francis kissing a leper. The action is typical of Pope Francis's direct reaching out to those who dwell on the peripheries of society. In a recent interview (Feb. 28, 2017) with a Milan magazine, Francis spoke of the importance of giving help to homeless panhandlers and also added, "The gesture is important, helping those who ask, looking them in the eyes and touching their hands (emphasis added). Tossing the money without looking in the eyes, that is not the gesture of a Christian. Teaching in charity is not about offloading one's own sense of guilt, but it is touching, looking at our inner poverty that the Lord understands and saves. Because we all have inner poverty." These words and gestures of Pope Francis remind us of the importance of doing the Corporal Works of Mercy as acts of prayer. Matthew 25 reminds us that we touch God when we touch the homeless, the hungry, the broken, and the disfigured. But it is not only in the disfigured bodies of others that we encounter the living God; we also encounter the Lord as we deal with our personal issues regarding our bodies.

THE PRAYER OF A BODY IN PAIN

The broken and disfigured body of Jesus on the cross with his arms outstretched reminds us that our bodies too in their brokenness and woundedness can also be a powerful but wordless offering to God. In a homily for the Second Sunday of Lent (March

12, 2017) Pope Francis spoke of the disfigured body of Christ between the Transfiguration and the Resurrection. "Between this beautiful transfiguration and that Resurrection there will be another face of Jesus. There will be a face that's not so beautiful. There will be an ugly face, disfigured, tortured, despised [and] bloodied. Jesus' entire body is like something to throw away." He added there are "two transfigurations, and in the middle is Jesus Crucified, the Cross." The tortured suffering body of Jesus reminds us that embracing the suffering and pain which our bodies experience can be an expression of a prayer and a self-offering.

In her book, *Becoming Wise – An Inquiry Into the Mystery and Art of Living* – Krista Tippett points out that for much of history, religion was a full body experience whereas Western culture today, for all its emphasis on sexuality, is deeply disembodied. We have become out of touch with our bodies. It is our bodies, she argues, that are "access points to mystery" and open to us deep truth about ourselves. Our bodies, even in their brokenness, tell us a truth that our minds can obscure. It is often our physical sufferings that open us to the deep truth of who we are before God. It is important to be able to listen to our bodies and inhabit them with all their flaws. It is a beautiful and liberating realization that comes from inhabiting and loving our own bodies and to know that they are more than mere ciphers for our souls. They are an inseparable part of who we are.

MARY OLIVER WRITES IN HER POEM, "THE FOURTH SIGN OF THE ZODIAC"

I know, you never intended to be in this world.
But you're in it all the same.
So why not get started immediately.
I mean, belonging to it.

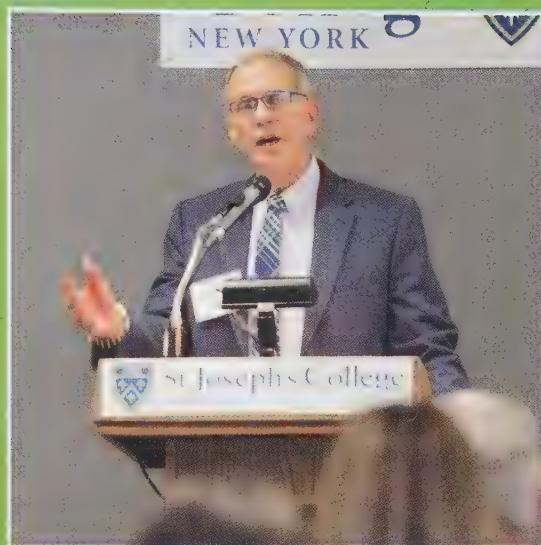
The broken and disfigured body of Jesus on the cross with his arms outstretched reminds us that our bodies too in their brokenness and woundedness can also be a powerful but wordless offering to God.

There is so much to admire, to weep over.
 And to write music or poems about.
 Bless the feet that take you to and fro.
 Bless the eyes and the listening ears.
 Bless the tongue, the marvel of taste.
 Bless touching.
 You could live a hundred years, it's
 happened. Or not.

In a way characteristic of so many of her poems, she recognizes, as did early religion and early Christianity, the centrality of the body as an instrument of prayer. In modern times, due in large part to Descartes splitting of the mind and the body, the essential unit of the two has been lost. Re-engaging the senses in the act of praying can give us a whole new understanding of prayer and myriad new ways of encountering, experiencing, and praising the living God. In the words of Psalm 34: "Taste and see the goodness of the Lord."

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- The following exercise is suggested by Jane E. Vennard in *Praying with Body and Soul*: Complete the following sentences.
 - I know God when I see _____
 - I know God when I hear _____
 - I know God when I touch _____
 - I know God when I taste _____
 - I know God when I smell _____
- Think about times and ways actions and postures affect, even deepen your prayer. (Kneeling, prostration, sitting, walking, singing, etc.)
- How can we be more open to our senses in a way that can enhance and expand our prayer?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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VULNERABILITY

CORE TO EFFECTIVE MINISTRY

Caroline Wroblewski



Our personal experiences and daily prayer are the fertile soil for a deeper relationship with God and for the seeds of faith to grow and mature. Knowledge of Scripture and Tradition, when incorporated and applied to our lived experience, is basic for vocational discernment and service. Yet, nothing compares with the learning attained from personal life experience. No one gives car keys to someone who has not had driver's education, practice, and testing. Jesus did not give the Keys of the Kingdom to Peter before years of teaching, storytelling, preaching, witnessing his many miracles and cures, or without Peter's many experiences of failing to understand or accept the Paschal Mystery of Christ. Peter lied; Thomas doubted; Judas yielded to bribery and thievery. All of us have memories of similar vulnerable situations, and the accompanying feelings of shame, loss, grief, guilt, anxiety, fear, or anger. Such emotions bring us face-to-face with God and might even lead us to doubt God's presence and support in the experience. It is one thing to know and another to experience vulnerability for it shakes us to the core and touches us in the depths of our hearts.



People come to ministers wanting something from the God Healer, the Merciful One, the Consoler. Living through critical life events with the loving support of significant others opens one to experience personally God's presence, love and compassion. This dynamic is central to the act of ministering. Having experienced hurt, having been in need, and having been desperate enough to ask for help, enables a minister to understand in an empathetic way the internal experience of the one seeking help. Managing our own losses and suffering is essential for us to be worthy and capable to minister to others.

Let me describe the journey of three very blessed individuals who minister in the Church and who, when faced with the challenges of their own vulnerability, came to a deeper understanding of what ministry involves. The first is a wife and mother; the second is a priest; and, the third is a consecrated religious sister. Each, after a long period of time grappling alone with the complexity of their evolving life circumstances, felt terrifyingly

confronted with God's presence or absence. What had once been perceived a curse came to be realized an invitation for a deeper relationship with God. It changed their manner of being in relationship with those to whom they ministered.

RITA

Every week I visit and dine with a longtime friend. She is married and loves her husband very much; her children are happily married and have families of their own. Until becoming seriously ill and physically limited, Rita was involved in several parish ministries. She taught Catechism, served as a Eucharist Minister, and visited the sick of the parish. She also worked in centers for physically and mentally challenged teens, preparing them for employment. She reached out to those in her extended family when they were in need. Of greatest importance to her is being a loving wife and mother and caring for her family. Hospitality envelops the loving spirit in Rita's home; all are welcomed and invited around

their table. At the heart of her love and service to others has been Rita's increasing awareness of the love God has for all creation. This deep desire to share that love with all whom she meets reflects Rita's evolving spirituality.

As with all blessings, there is a thorn, attached. For a long time, Rita did not know the underlying motivation behind her generosity and love. Consciously, her actions were for the love of God. It wasn't until later in life that she realized her goodness and worth was measured by what and how much she did. She felt she could never do enough and what she did was "not good enough." Those close to her feared she was doing too much for others and not enough for her own health and well-being. Her belief system, filled with irrationalities, colored Rita's experience and relationship with God, leaving her with the image of a critical and judging God.

Rita's body seemed to serve as God's medium to awaken her to the transforming realization that God loved her for who she was, and not so much for what she did. Over the course of some 30 years, Rita suffered several severe back surgeries coupled with debilitating fibromyalgia. More recently, she underwent surgery and treatment for cancer. Along with constant physical pain, Rita managed symptoms of depression and anxiety, both of which contributed at times to distortions in thinking about her goodness and ability to love and serve.

Through many days and nights in hospitals Rita struggled in her relationship with God. Her resistance was high; her level of acceptance, low. During the hours spent daily in her recliner at home she felt much inner turmoil, emotional pain greater than anything physical. Struggling for months through the felt "curse" of her body limiting her and preventing her from being of service, in time Rita opened

her heart to the "blessing" of accepting the physical challenges with gratitude.

Now in her early 70's, Rita's physical limitations, while much improved, still remain. Despite the fact that she no longer ministers formally in the parish church, Rita continues to minister to others. When at Mass and the need for a lector is made known, if Rita feels physically able, she volunteers. While she can no longer serve as a Eucharistic Minister, she does invite others to gather round her family table for light refreshment, conversation, and play. The use of a telephone enables her to reach out to others, listening to them express their hurt, pain, or grief. And, because she can identify with their experience, she is better able to speak with compassion and empathy, allowing God to act through her.

Why do I visit Rita so frequently? She spontaneously smiles and her eyes brighten whenever she sees me. God certainly is with us as she describes her progress and challenges in ambulating. She expresses much gratitude to God for the gift of life and the joy in relationships. Journeying with her has helped me realize the healing power of God in coming to an acceptance of reality and how to work with it. Her outer "world" has gotten smaller as she is less able to go out independently. Yet her inner world with God only deepens and expands. Unable to connect with others physically as she did so easily in the past, she now invites them into her home, a God-filled space. Being in physical pain most of the day, she is gentle toward her body and takes the necessary steps to care for it as it is God's gift to her. She has a wonderful sense of humor and is still interested in other people. She has a strong desire to deepen her relationship with God and is discovering new ways in which God is present and loving her. Without expressly stating it, or maybe even being conscious of

it, Rita's transformation is quite visible as it slowly emerges. All she can do is BE – be her generous, supportive, and loving self with those who gravitate around her. As she lives in this quiet way she may not even realize just how much she actually brings others into the experience of God and allows God to heal their hurt and pain.

FATHER MARK

Father Mark, at age 45 years, had been the pastor of a rural parish for some years; he was highly respected and trusted by his parishioners. He was faithful to his priestly responsibilities both personally and pastorally. He lived alone in the rectory. He felt good about his accomplishments as a priest; yet, he was lonely. Friday night was his night to relax, enjoying a nicely prepared meal and having a glass or two of wine.

A woman of the parish suffered the loss of her husband after a long-term illness. Father Mark would visit Barbara and her husband in the hospital and at home during the time of his illness and death. He knew the couple well and became close to both of them. The death of the husband was a loss not only for Barbara but for Father Mark as well. After her husband's death, Barbara met regularly with Father Mark as he supported and guided her through the grieving process. Supporting her in this way provided him the opportunity to share his own grief with her. As the weeks progressed the sessions became more frequent; their relationship in time became intimate and sexual. Father Mark

lived in this relationship secretly for a rather long time, while also performing his duties as pastor. Aware that his life was no longer one of integrity, Father Mark experienced many painful thoughts and feelings and guilt for violating his vow of celibacy. He began to question the future direction of his life. He felt unable to speak to anyone, not a colleague, friend, Barbara, or even God. He did not want to let go of his priesthood. He was confused. His use of alcohol gradually increased to ease the emotional pain and drown his thoughts.

Only when Father Mark's poor functioning and behaviors became noticeable were parishioners able to recognize that something was amiss with Father Mark. His performance as priest and pastor slackened. He often was late or did not show up to preside at daily Mass, having slept through the alarm. He forgot appointments, and at times could not be found for scheduled events. He got irritated and angry when parishioners spoke of their concern and dismay, blaming them for their high expectations of him. Despite the shame, guilt and sense of personal failure felt, he still could not bring himself to ask for help. Instead, he denied having a problem and continued to lie and make excuses for his irresponsible ministerial behaviors.

As Father Mark's life grew increasingly more complex, he felt he had no recourse but to continue drinking. Through the initiative of some parishioners, the Bishop intervened and Father Mark complied with the recommendation to enter a treatment program

It is important to note that Father Mark, after addressing the chaos in his life and working to be in right relationship with God and others, came to a greater acceptance and ownership of his humanness and vulnerability.

for addiction. This was not easy for him; he trusted no one with the challenges in life he was facing. He could not allow himself to appear less than perfect, and struggled to look as if he had it “all together.” While in treatment Father Mark followed a healthy routine of life providing adequate time for: exercise, nutrition, and sleep; prayer, reflection, and education, as well as group sharing, friendships, and leisure. He utilized individual and group therapies as well as spiritual direction. He participated in the Twelve Step Program of Alcoholics Anonymous. Refraining from alcohol helped him to gain clarity of mind and heart that enabled him to reflect on those events contributing to his confusion and unhappiness, and gradually came to know his basic desire in life.

During this time Father Mark discovered God’s love for him and his need to grow in his relationship with God through prayer. He also came to see his need for people in his life with whom he could be open and vulnerable. Father Mark returned to parish life with a plan for balance in daily life, one begun and practiced in treatment that helped him be in right relationship to himself, others, and God. Recognizing his need to live in a way that fosters good physical and emotional health, and fidelity to his priestly commitment, this plan specified what he needed to do: 1) care for and respect his body; 2) express his needs, wants, and emotions appropriately; 3) engage others socially and develop friendships in a manner befitting his priesthood; 4) be accountable to three or four trusted others and seek their support for the management of his plan; 5) be faithful to regular spiritual practices that foster his relationship with God.

It is important to note that Father Mark, after addressing the chaos in his life and working to be in right relationship with God and others, came to a greater acceptance and ownership of



his humanness and vulnerability. In addition, Father Mark realized the need to be in healthy and trusting relationships, supportive of him in his priestly vocation and his personal well-being. Father Mark now approaches people in his ministry in the very way he experienced others ministering to him when he had been in chaos: a wounded healer.

SISTER CATHERINE

Sister Catherine, a member of her Religious Community for some 20 years, was quite successful in her service to children and their parents as teacher and administrator. She exhibited much enthusiasm, joy, and happiness. Sister was exceptionally creative,

knowledgeable, and well organized in managing both classroom and school. She was actively involved in community life, served on committees, and generously gave of her time. Sister Catherine was faithful in prayer, both personally and communally. She had many friends in the community, and balanced well her social life and personal time for reflection and leisure activities.

And then, something changed, very slowly and subtly. Sister Catherine's involvement in school and community service gradually increased and intensified. The school earned several recognitions; the community benefitted greatly from her contributions and service. Being athletic, Sister Catherine engaged in sports as one of her leisure activities. Her involvement increased here as well, and as a result she was acclaimed for bringing her team to first place in both the state and the nation. She received much praise and several ribbons for her personal achievements. Her religious community cheered her on!

Even though she smiled and was pleasant through it all, none of her many accomplishments brought Sister Catherine any genuine satisfaction, peace, or joy. She sought only to do more, and did so until she felt overwhelmed and depleted of emotion, energy, and life itself. She reportedly was unable to experience the personal loving God who had been her sustenance since childhood.

It was at this point that Sister Catherine realized her need for help and asked this from the leadership of her community. In the course of her therapy Sister Catherine recognized the shifts in her behaviors and uncovered the motivation behind them. She noted that her ministry and accomplishments were more self-serving, and less about genuine care for the well-being of others. As she explored this reality with her God and therapist, Sister

Catherine managed to face the harm done to her in childhood, which she had unconsciously buried with good works because she felt completely worthless and unlovable. She worked hard in therapy to remove the "mask," to come to see and accept herself as God does, and to be seen by others in her vulnerability and humanness. Reconciling the many painful aspects of her early life and finding peace, Sister Catherine freed herself of its binding force. She could now engage ministry wholeheartedly with integrity and a healthy and respectful sense of self.

Today, Sister Catherine ministers to others with a deep sensitivity and compassion, knowing from her own experience the power of the unconscious to protect us from addressing painful realities of the past. Having struggled to trust another, Sister Catherine discovered that relationships develop slowly. In working with others she is careful not to be too inquisitive or directive. She witnesses God's care and love for the other by her support, care, and encouragement. Sister Catherine now patiently waits for God to act; she listens to the other and lets the other person find the answers in their own way; she provides clarity only when needed. Sister Catherine exercises great patience and invites the other to greater patience with themselves because healing is God's work; the minister creates space for God to act.

CORE TO MEANINGFUL MINISTRY

Presence and relationship are at the heart of ministry. Those ministering need to be fully present to the person, the place, and the moment, realizing that God is there. The New Testament, especially St. Paul's Epistles, is filled with the many Gifts of the Spirit (wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge, piety, fear of the Lord) and the fruits of the spirit (love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, gentleness,





self-control) given those initiated and befitting people for ministry. No one has all Gifts; they are to be discovered and shared within the community. Our own unique gifts come to light as we live and relate with those around us. When utilizing these gifts in ministry it is with the belief that God acts through us to provide blessings needed by those we serve. Conscious awareness of the action of the Holy Spirit in our own life enables us to more fully engage others when ministering. Attending to our own vulnerabilities and seeking help when needed sensitizes the minister to the vulnerability experienced by those receiving care.

A sense of personal well-being, happiness, and life-giving connection with others

are important factors for the efficacy of meaningful ministry. God's presence and healing action is made known through the minister; the one ministering, therefore, needs to be centered and focused as much as is humanly possible to keep the channels of communication – mind, heart, voice, and all one's senses – open and clear. Addictions, mood disorders, unresolved relational conflicts and emotions, or untreated physical conditions can cause static, impairing the free flowing activity of God through the minister. Choosing to clear the static and actually take the necessary steps to get the help needed to resolve the issues begins the process of opening the channel for God to communicate.

Rita's greatest concern was productivity – what and how much she could do for others. She focused on the worthiness of her action, herself, and her performance. Only as she became more physically limited was she forced to shift her focus away from doing and toward being God-centered when ministering with and for others. Gradually she became more attentive to the other and listened for what the other really needed. She also learned to let God speak through her for the other's well-being.

Father Mark on the other hand, living alone and in a rural setting, had few social connections outside of those with parishioners. His parish responsibilities were quite manageable, and he became too comfortable with the structure and his routine. Father Mark's primary aim was to prove that he could manage the parish and he gave it top priority. Little did he realize the negative consequences this would have on his health and well-being, physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. While in treatment, Father Mark learned the importance of creating and maintaining a balance in self-care as well as the care of others. He learned the value of eating healthy

Speaking to one who can help discern God's Word heard in prayer and in the events of his or her own life is a great asset enabling the minister to distinguish personal desires from God's desire.

meals and dining with others regularly, of incorporating exercise in his weekly plan, and of getting a good night's sleep. He realized the need to have people in his life, peers rather than those under his care, and the importance of friendship. He experienced the importance of sharing concerns, unresolved emotions, and conflicts. And, Father Mark recognized the necessity of having leisure time built into his life, both alone and with others, to refresh and renew him in mind, body, and spirit. He discovered how these practices enriched his spiritual life and his relationship with God. He found that it enabled him to be a truly human and authentic priest.

By the end of treatment Father Mark knew that living alone was not healthy for him or his priesthood. He and his bishop explored possibilities and together identified a parish setting where Father Mark could better meet his personal needs while also engaging in ministry with a newly discovered sensitivity to God's love and compassion for the suffering of those in his care.

As for Sister Catherine, believing she was unlovable left her feeling empty and void of the fruit of God's gifts to her in the good work done in ministry. Now, after accepting God's healing love, loving care is the primary force behind her actions. Coming to love herself as God loves her, Sister Catherine desires that others experience this grace for themselves as they heal. She renders that love by sharing her gifts with gentleness and care, concern and compassion, and simultaneously experiences God's presence and love.

CORE TO A HEALTHY MINISTER

There are many aspects contributing to effective ministry. Ministry involves serving God and God's people, and fostering the relationship between them. Healthy relationships are the fruit of integrity, openness, and vulnerability. It would seem then that what follows, while basic to the whole of the Christian life, is essential for anyone engaging in ministry.

A LOVING RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Whether exercised in the context of the vowed or consecrated lifestyle within the Church, or flowing out of our Baptismal commitment, the minister needs a deep faith and personal relationship with God. This relationship grows and deepens when we consciously encounter God in worship and the sacraments, and make time for personal prayer. Spiritual direction is a great source of assurance for the minister. Speaking to one who can help discern God's Word heard in prayer and in the events of his or her own life is a great asset enabling the minister to distinguish personal desires from God's desire for the one receiving ministry, and to uncover any imbalances in the minister's personal life that could hamper him or her in process of ministering. While deepening one's relationship with God, being faithful to one's spiritual practices helps not only to develop a contemplative spirit and the capacity to listen with one's heart and mind but also to hear the need not readily or immediately expressed by the one being helped. Praying daily gradually

opens the minister to the awareness of God's presence throughout the day. Becoming more God-conscious facilitates entering into the sacred space of ministry and being open to hear God's voice and allow God to speak and act through him or her.

A LOVING RELATIONSHIP WITH SELF

As intimacy with God deepens one comes to see and love oneself as God does, and to see all as gift. This frees the minister to cooperate with God in becoming more fully human, more loving, and more vulnerable as he or she grapples with and accepts the challenges of life. God's love invites us to love and respect and care for our body in all its dimensions, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Living in a religious community, a rectory, or a family brings many time-consuming responsibilities and concerns. Employment and ministry pose additional demands on our time and energy. These stressors can weigh heavily on us in mind and heart, and negatively affect our bodies and relationships. Illness or death of loved ones, unresolved conflicts at home or at work, in the parish or in community can rouse difficult emotions within us -- sadness, grief, hurt, anger, fear, or frustration. These situations resolve themselves only with time and effort.

How we manage ourselves, love ourselves, through such events is critical to our well-being. We could lose sleep, eat less or more, get irritated, agitated, or lethargic. We might get easily distracted and lose focus, or have difficulty concentrating and making wise decisions. Emotional angst could lead us to isolate ourselves and resist the support of those around us. Our pride could lead us to a false sense of self-sufficiency. Conversely, when we develop intimacy with God we will more readily realize the need to accept the help of trusted friends. Those intimate with God and vulnerable with others tend to be better able to

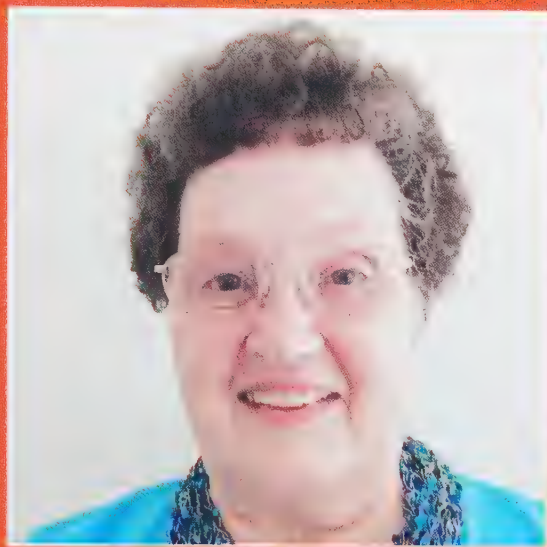
minister with greater care and compassion to others.

A LOVING RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS AND ALL GOD'S CREATION

We live in God's universe, born into a world that requires our stewardship. We are challenged to care for our planet with the same love and respect that we are to have for ourselves. We are called to love all God's people, striving to see them through the eyes of God, and love them as God loves them. This call to ministry, inherent in our nature, is an awesome responsibility affecting how we choose to live each day. As we become more aware of this reality our whole being and way of relating changes; we become more reverent and more God-centered. Ministering to others with this reverence tends to create an environment of care and respect. Being fully attentive to the person, their words and physical reactions, their appearance and environment, encourages the one in need to speak freely and confidently.

Life is about connection and relationships. Christian life seeks to mirror the loving relationships of the Trinity. During His earthly life Jesus sought to embody the mystery of God's communion of life and love. The stories of Rita, Father Mark, and Sister Catherine portray broken relationships, personal chaos, disintegration within the self, separation from others and the outer world, and a disconnect from God. For each of them the healing process necessitated becoming vulnerable, letting go of paralyzing shame, and trusting respected others. It necessitated letting trusted others know how they view themselves and to hear how they were perceived by these trusted others. It necessitated their coming to see themselves as others do, and as God sees them, and to begin to trust the validity of what they were told.

Simultaneously, Rita, Father Mark, and Sister Catherine needed to create a balance in daily living, in self-care and that of others and the world around them. Learning to care for their physical, emotional, social, and spiritual health were key factors in stepping out of their chaos. Balancing the time devoted to work, prayer, leisure and play, family and relationships opened them to experience life differently and facilitated their coming to wholeness. Each of us walks the path of vulnerability, journeying and ministering along the way to our brothers and sisters as we all are drawn together into the Trinitarian Communion of love.



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Each of Caroline Wroblewski's fictional characters experience a "conversion" process. They began as efficient and generous spiritual ministers but were lacking an inner peace; they were "underdeveloped" as human beings. They emerged from their "crisis" by facing their vulnerability and discussing it with others. Having dealt with their own struggles, they are now all the more prepared for ministry. Over the years, have you also lived through a similar process and spiritual refinement?
2. At the core of this process is the discovery of a loving relationship with God, a recognition of being loved by God as a free gift, not something "earned" by our effort. One can be a loving minister only if he/she lets God take hold of their lives. Is there any way I still hold back from letting that happen?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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WOUNDED HEALER

Mary Ellen Merrick, IHM, D.Min., CAAAC

There are probably few, if any, reading this article who have not suffered a wound at some point along life's journey. A physical wound is a break or opening in the skin. It could come from playing a sport, doing gardening, cleaning the house, working on the car, being part of an accident. Our body is a marvel and the part that moves to protect us from germs and infection is the skin. It moves immediately to begin the stages of healing. The smaller the wound, the quicker it heals; the larger or deeper, the longer it takes to heal. If it bleeds, a scab will form and the immune system starts to protect the wound from infection. The wound becomes slightly swollen, red or pink, and tender. There may be clear liquid that comes from the wound that appears and is needed to clean the area. Blood vessels open in the area, so blood can bring oxygen and nutrients to the wound that are essential for healing. White blood cells help fight infection from germs and begin to repair the wound. This takes about 2-5 days.

The next stage happens when the body repairs broken blood vessels and new tissue grows. Collagens, which are tough, white fibers, form the foundation for the new tissue. New skin forms over this tissue and the edges pull inward as the wound gets smaller. A scar forms and the wound becomes stronger. Over time, the scar may fade and disappear completely. This can take as long as two years. Some scars never go away completely.

Moving from the physical to the emotional and spiritual aspects of a human being, there are other wounds that also need time, attention, and care in order to heal. Many people who have been hurt, embarrassed, exploited, and scarred by others manage to move on. But yet, sadly, many wounds never heal. We have stories of a country torn apart during the years of the American Civil War, where families were never able to reconcile differences, the Hatfield's and the McCoy's who fought for generations forgetting what the original slight was all about; college teams carry grudges of games lost to a rival opponent year after year until the loser finally is able to avenge the loss with a victory; the 108 years the fans of the Chicago Cubs endured. These are but a few of the many daily and ordinary events that people carry with them for decades.

If the physical part of a human being can heal and bear a reminder of a past hurt, then what does it take for the more fragile human psyche to do the same? What makes a "wounded healer?"

In Greek Mythology, the centaur Chiron (Kheiron) was regarded as set above the other centaurs. He was the eldest and wisest of the other centaurs and described as mentor to many of the Greek heroes. As the story goes Chiron accidentally suffered an incurable wound from a poisoned arrow from one of Hercules' arrows. Since he was immortal he suffered greatly and had to relinquish his immortality to find relief; Zeus placed him among the stars as the constellation Sagittarius. Chiron's name means

"skilled with the hands" and is closely associated with the Greek word for "surgeon." Chiron became associated with the concept of the "wounded healer."

Since none of us are Greek characters or endowed with superhuman ability, what is a "wounded healer" in a purely human context? What goes into the emergence of such a person. Let us imagine someone who experiences a truly life changing moment. Sudden loss of a loved one, especially a child, becoming a refugee in a country ridden with violence and corruption, being persecuted because of race, ethnicity or religion.

Initially there is usually a period of shock. The immediate reaction is much like the physical response to a wound. The body's reaction is to shut down so it does not become overwhelmed. The person begins to come to grips with the reality of the situation and uses emotional and spiritual resources to tend to the searing wound. There is no way to predict how long this process will take as it relies on the individual person's ability to respond. Over time a "scab" of sorts will form made up of qualities such as resilience, acceptance, hope, and reintegration. Individuals who have the grace to deal with their own profound wounds seem to offer a presence that is welcoming and attractive to others who are thrust into their own experience of chaos and disruption.

These "wounded healers" understand without words being uttered, they provide a presence that is comforting. They seem to grasp that our one and only life is fundamentally mystery. They enable others to share their stories in a non-judgmental atmosphere and seldom offer quick solutions. They remain respectful of the person's ability to "find the way back" and begin to live again. An integration has taken place with their own woundedness and a healthy "scar" has formed over the open wound. While they have not forgotten the pain, it has ceased having power over their lives.



In a book entitled *The Art of Christian Listening*, Thomas Hart affirms that people yearn to have someone listen to them. Listening, without interrupting and prematurely offering advice, is a rare gift. If you have ever had the experience of having someone focus on you as you poured out your pain and hurt, you know that great feeling. Professional therapists are trained in the art of listening and it has been established through much research that the best predictor of a successful therapeutic outcome is the relationship created between the person and the therapist. Hart also posits that the presence of someone who “has done his/her own work” allows for another to draw closer to the hurt and pain. He/she does not “solve” the problem or take the pain away. This person functions as a companion and resource, watching with concern and compassion, listening and responding, being available.

Jesus, when he walked the earth for a short period of time in his active ministry, modeled this presence. He drew people to himself by an openness, availability, compassion, and capacity to listen deeply. People felt comfortable telling Him their deepest secrets and hurts. He offered hope and healing at each encounter. His ministry was based on authentic love. Love is a creative and transformative power, coming into our lives as the great surprise, filling our sails with a fresh breeze.

And Jesus stopped and said, “You all have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ But I say to you, love your enemies who persecute you. And to the one who hates you, love him who is hating you.” And Jesus taking all his mantle he sprang up and came to them.” (Luke 10:35-37)

Love is also a choice as well as gift. It is a choice to respect another, to recognize his/her autonomy, to welcome another warmly, and to provide an environment where one can feel safe. Jesus did all of



this and more. Jesus was a wounded healer before the term was written about by Nouwen or anyone else.

It would make sense that the wounded healers among us either have or have been able to find a deep wellspring of faith that allows them to heal their own hurt and pain well below the surface. They have suffered beyond scrapes or bruises that can heal in a few days’ time. Remarkably, they seem to have transcended and transformed the experiences into something that can be used to benefit other people in pain. They have become better, not bitter. Bitterness,

like an infection, only allows such a wound to fester and spread. A person who is unable or unwilling to heal only gets worse as time passes. This can also be passed on to others and/or become part of relationships that are not healthy for anyone.

We can look to many parts of our world today where entire peoples are profoundly experiencing pain and hurt. They have been battered and tossed about like spray upon the sea. They long for a safe haven where they can find shelter, safety, and rest.

We have neighbors who are in similar situations in the next house or apartment to ours. Do we even notice? Or are we focused on nursing old wounds that we revisit periodically and are reluctant to allow to heal? Do we take offense as an immediate response and let real or imagined slights build to towering heights? Are we selective with whom we are gracious and open? Do we stop and try to consider what someone else may be going through?

Pope Francis embodies the spirit and style of a “wounded healer.” He endured personal pain and suffering, even at the hands of some of his Jesuit brothers. As Archbishop of Buenos Aires from 1998-2013, he modeled a ministry of service by eschewing the extravagant robes of his position for the simple attire of a humble priest. Francis has become known as the “people’s pontiff” and that is no mere accident. He attracts the better instincts in people who desire to live as the Gospel encourages us to do.

So many things to think about and consider. Imagine what our world might be like if more people would permit themselves the pursuit of integrating their particular deep wound into a source of healing for themselves and others. Do all have the capacity to be wounded healers? To some degree, most of us try to be open to that gift. How might that happen? Usually the critical first moment is facing the reality of the pain and then finding someone with whom to share, someone who understands “wounds.”

Talking about it, sometimes over and over, until it has had a chance to integrate into our life, is critical to any chance of real healing. The memory becomes less overwhelming and controlling. This takes some time and patience with oneself. Just like a physical wound that goes through a necessary process of time and stages, wounds of the heart require the passing of time. Pain, whether it is physical, emotional or spiritual, is a signal that something is in need of our attention. If you are in a state of pain, look for examples of people, living and deceased, all around our world, who seem to have been able to cooperate with God’s grace, mercy and compassion in dealing with their own hurt and have moved forward. Dialogue with them and let the miracle of healing happen upon you and then through you.

Pope Francis embodies the spirit and style of a “wounded healer.” He endured personal pain and suffering, even at the hands of some of his Jesuit brothers.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mary Ellen Mervick, IHM, D.Mit., C.A.A.D.C., is a member of the Sisters, Servants of The Immaculate Heart of Mary (Scranton, PA). Sr. Mary Ellen has been in the ministry of education and addiction since 1969 and has national and international experience in presenting topics concerning addiction to interested groups. Sr. Mary Ellen taught at Loyola University in Maryland for 25 years, directed an outpatient trauma center that was called upon to assist with the 9/11 attack on the Pentagon, the attack on Virginia Tech, and she had an outpatient practice that included consulting with religious communities in the Baltimore/Washington

area. Currently she serves as the Executive Director of the Women's Program at Guest House that serves women religious from various traditions who need assistance in understanding and dealing with substance use disorders and process addictions, such as hoarding, credit card debt, gambling, internet games/surfing, and compulsive overeating.

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QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Do you believe all people are capable – to some degree – of being a “wounded healer?”
2. Can you think of a time or way someone was such a person for you? Have you been privileged to serve as a wounded healer for someone else?



WOMEN'S STATUE

By Mary Ellen McCarthy

Agent House has in its possession a beautiful wood-burned sculpture of a statue entitled "Saviorship." This piece came from a group of women who were at Casa Loma during the summer of 1911. There was a desire to have something on campus that indicated that women were present and the original, rough clay image was created. The small 12" statue remained in the dressmaker's office until a new facility was needed and then a sculptor emerged to form the creation of the statue into the four-and-one-half-foot tall symbol of courage and strength that today graces the lobby of the women's treatment center.

Many people turned the statue to being this statue its present state. Dr. Car. Immaculation, PhD, a noted artist and sculptress, accepted the responsibility of creating the statue in the studio she works at in Long Island City, N.Y. Bantec Sculpture Casting, which has done creations such as the bronze bull outside of the New York Stock Exchange, worked with Dr. Car for six months to go through the delicate steps of the "lost wax method."



This intricate and delicate process involves making an original sculpture from wax or clay and putting it through a series of steps until the original material melts under intense heat and reveals the metal sculpture. The result was worth waiting for!

“Recovering” has been incorporated into the discharge liturgy and ceremony for each sister as she prepares to leave Guest House and live her life of recovery. The statue is of a woman who is stepping forward and looking upward to her future. There is a bag dragging behind her and, if one looks closely, the bag is beginning to separate at her shoulder. As she continues to move forward she will leave this bag behind with its load of pain and disappointments. Each sister has the opportunity to leave her own rock with something written or drawn on it indicating what she is leaving behind. These rocks, different shapes, sizes, and colors, reflect a piece of each woman’s journey at Guest House.

The sister who fashioned the original small clay statue wrote the following reflection on her work:

RECOVERING

A solid, strong woman representing all who have
 the modes of fragile clay on their shoulders
 Her right arm is reaching upward and
 Her right foot
 Her name is the female in God's strength
 Her name, the name of the strong
 Her happy face radiates hope as she reaches life
 Her long, powerful arm stands tall holding her
 head up high, she is moving forward, not staying
 positive
 Her recovery is hard work
 Her walking in God alone is not enough and that
 she will
 Always be in process
 Her left arm is down at the
 verge of letting go of a great burden as the baggage
 strap
 On her shoulder breaks,
 Freeing her of the guilt, shame, fear, etc., that
 Weighed her down.
 Her life is no longer unmanageable!

- Suzanne P.





COMING TO WHOLENESS

Kevin Keenan, Ph.D.



AFFECT AND RELATIONSHIP IN ADULT DEVELOPMENT

My perspective on adult development has been informed by my healing, helping and teaching experiences over the past 45 years. My first steps along this journey were as a paraprofessional therapist working in a residential treatment setting while I was a college student in 1972. My work there was interesting, deeply satisfying and led me to graduate school for formal training as a psychologist with a focus on becoming a psychotherapist. Over the decades I worked in public, private and university hospitals and outpatient treatment centers before joining a group practice about 25 years ago that had been founded by an Adrian Dominican sister who was also a psychologist. There I have found a home among a small group of colleagues who had a commitment to practicing depth psychotherapy with men and women of faith, many of whom had a vocation as a consecrated religious. While maintaining this practice, I have also been teaching graduate students who were in training to become professional psychotherapists.

My focus in this article will be on development during adulthood with an emphasis on affective and relational issues. Reaching chronological adulthood does not guarantee full personal maturity: we continue to experience challenges and opportunities for growth throughout our lifespan. Each era of life, developmental milestone, important activity, major transition and significant relationship brings with it an opportunity to define and refine our strengths and weaknesses, our potential and limitations as we move along our journey. Not only are we not fully formed by the time we reach adulthood, but also most of us are in some ways malformed due to the imperfections and inadequacies of our earlier developmental experiences. Thus, the overall tasks of adulthood involve new personal development built upon a foundation that may be in need of ongoing repair.

THE HEART HAS REASON THAT REASON KNOWS NOT - *Blaise Pascal*

As part of a course I taught in clinical practice, different members of the faculty came each week and demonstrated a live therapeutic interview. Despite vast differences in style and technique, there was a common element to each interview – every single psychologist gave particular attention to the client's spontaneous expression of affect; that focus became the foundation of the therapeutic work in that session. The importance of affect in therapy today reflects a significant change in how affect has come to be viewed by psychology. Historically, emotion has often been seen in opposition to rational and healthy thought. Emotion has epitomized subjectivity in distinction to objectivity. Today the prevalent view is that it is a lack of emotional awareness and the

presence of emotional dysregulation - not emotion per se - that is problematic. Emotional awareness and self-regulation are now viewed as essential components to healthy adaptive functioning.

Our current state of knowledge about brain functioning indicates that all sensory experience is implicitly evaluated for its emotional significance milliseconds before we consciously evaluate it. Our automatic affective evaluation operates outside of awareness and shapes or biases our more "rational" evaluation of experience. Thus, our so-called objectivity can be illusory. Only an awareness of our subjective affectivity allows us to recognize the extent to which our rational objectivity can be fraught with illusory bias. One well-researched example of this is the confirmation bias: we see and hear what we want, expect or fear.

Affect is immediately and automatically involved in all of our experiences. This is a very powerful statement and I wondered how evident it was. So, I considered this conjecture as I was writing this article. I was not aware of feeling anything in the moment until I intentionally wondered what I might be feeling. Looking out my second floor window, I noticed the treetops and the overarching bare branches against a bright blue early spring sky. Mildly pleasant thoughts and memories about trees came to mind and even the words of a Shakespearean sonnet remembered from high school English: "Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang." I could see some color on the tips of some of the dark branches, signs of spring, I thought, in pleasant anticipation of the last struggles of Michigan winters. A small smile shaped in the corner of my mouth as I realized my pleasure with the trees. I felt good.

Despite vast differences in style and technique... every single psychologist gave particular attention to the client's spontaneous expression of affect; that focus became the foundation of the therapeutic work.

I Googled the line from Shakespeare that I had remembered and read commentary on the sonnet. The author had a much darker interpretation of wintering trees as a reference to death in contrast to my appreciation of the leafless branches as harbinger to the renewal of spring. Analysis of this scenario suggested to me that I was in a good mood, a pleasant underlying emotional state that I was unaware of prior to asking myself about my feelings. My mood influenced what I found notable outside my window and how I interpreted it. This realization, or manifestation of my emotional state in my perception, thought and memory illustrates how cognition can be shaped by mood. Our emotions - even subtle affective states outside our awareness - can shape our perceptions. Cognitions such as attitudes and beliefs can also shape affect. Affect and cognition have a reciprocal relationship, each influences the other. It is through the integration of affect and cognition that we move toward wholeness.

THE FOUNDATION OF EMOTIONAL AWARENESS AND SELF-REGULATION

Degrees of pleasure versus distress and excitement versus calm define our earliest emotional experiences. When infants are hungry or colicky, their distress grows until it either consumes their whole being or “mothering” relieves them. Infants are entirely dependent on others for relief. Rudimentary empathy is wired into human beings and almost all adults respond with discomfort and caregiving to infant cries of distress as well as with delight to baby smiles and gurgles. The infant’s earliest affective experiences are entirely moderated by the infant’s relationships with others. The child’s experience of pleasure and the relief of displeasure is indistinguishable from the experience of relationship. In a good family, the infant learns that affect is more pleasant than otherwise, that distress is relieved by others and that relationships are good and reliably helpful. This reciprocal interdependence of affective experience and relationality persists throughout childhood and to a lesser extent throughout life.



It is important to note that all emotional experiences are rooted in bodily sensations. Our feelings are felt in our bodies, not our minds. As we mature, we learn with the help of others to become familiar with certain feelings and to symbolize feelings with words. As adults we sometimes lose touch with that somatic sense but for children affect is first and foremost a bodily experience that begins to become understood only when others empathically label and sensitively explore and explain that experience. Some of the most important work I do as a therapist with adults is helping clients find words for feelings.

As a child grows older his or her emotional experience becomes more complex and requires more empathic skill from parents and other caretakers who must be attuned to the child's internal experience and external circumstances in order to effectively help the child name and regulate their emotions. Some parents have difficulties in recognizing and accepting certain emotions in the child. Feelings such as anger, sadness and even joy can be ignored, criticized or mislabeled rather than acknowledged, accepted and understood. In such circumstances a child can emerge into adolescence and adulthood without knowing how he or she feels at times because such feelings have not been acknowledged and labeled or have been labeled as bad which has led to those feeling being denied and suppressed.

AFFECT, ATTACHMENT AND INTIMACY

By the time children reach pre-school age their relationship with their parents and other significant caretakers has established a characteristic pattern involving their affect, their affective regulation and their relationship security. When young children are securely attached in their primary relationships they can separate from or be left by their parents or caretakers without undue distress and manage the uncertainty of play on their own or with others. When the adult returns, securely attached children are pleased and reunite easily. In contrast, children with an insecure attachment display dysfunctional and poorly regulated affects and disrupted maternal interactions.

Some insecurely attached children manage the discomfort of separation by being distant, disinterested and even rejecting of their parent or caretaker. Others are distressed, unable to engage in worry free play without the parent or caretaker and upset when they do return. Attachment patterns are thought to be related to the degree to which the parents and other primary caretakers have been reliable and effective with helping the child manage their emotional needs.

There is considerable research that indicates that attachment issues persist into adulthood and influence adult intimacy. Those with a history of more secure attachments are more willing to reach out to others for emotional support and to share on a deeper, more personal level than those who have been less securely attached. Furthermore, those who are more securely attached are able to develop and maintain more stable, mutually satisfying relationships. As an adult it is important to recognize one's attachment and intimacy issues. Work on emotional awareness and regulation increases one's capacity for intimacy and emotional development.

ADULT ATTACHMENT AND CODEPENDENCY

Originally, codependency was a term used to describe persons in a relationship with an addicted partner. More recently codependency has been used to describe a person who, in an effort to help another, unintentionally enables the other to maintain irresponsible, addictive or dysfunctional behavior. Enabling in this context refers to helping a person repeatedly avoid the natural consequences of recurrent dysfunctional behavior. The codependent relationship is not based on mutuality but on one-sidedness. It is based on a kind of anxiety-ridden love that is reminiscent of the anxious insecure child. A principal concern of the codependent individual is feeling worry or some guilty sense of responsibility for the other's behavior, behavior for which the other seems much less concerned and responsible. The more powerful the emotional pull to repeatedly rescue another, the more likely it is that one is repeating an insecure attachment pattern.

As codependency develops, the codependent individual may be unconsciously identifying with the apparent neediness of the dysfunctional individual, may see the helpless child in the dysfunctional other, and may become driven to relieve the distress caused by the other's repetitive dysfunctional behavior. In so doing, the codependent individual may be unconsciously trying to heal his/her own attachment

wounds by being both the understanding, sacrificing and rescuing parent as well as the distressed, helpless child. When codependency escalates it seldom turns out well for either relationship partner. Nowhere is the serenity prayer with its line about knowing what one can and cannot change more appropriate and comforting than in the codependent relationship. It is important to remember that it is not the emotions per se that are a problem in situations where attachment issues and codependency arise, but it is a lack of awareness of the emotional dynamics in codependency and a difficulty with regulating such feelings as anxiety and guilt which drive the escalation of codependency.

TRAUMA AND RESILIENCE

People vary widely in their response to traumatic events. Some people are wounded so severely by trauma that they only recover a semblance of normality. For others, the same traumatic event can be a temporary disruption in their lives. Thus, the severity of trauma is not defined by the objective characteristics of a situation, but by subjective experience. Understanding differences in how people respond to traumatic situations can provide insight into how we manage all manner of challenges great and small. An experience becomes traumatic to the extent that it overwhelms our ability to cope with it. When we have no ability to escape or diminish the painful experience we become traumatized. Young children are easily overwhelmed by difficult experiences because they have so few coping skills. They are dependent upon others to remove or mitigate their distress.

Some years ago I encountered an old friend at a school festival. She had just taken in a foster child who had been removed from an extremely dysfunctional family. It was a warm day and my foster mom friend put the toddler down on the sidewalk as we were talking. Within seconds this toddler lost its surrogate mother's attention, dropped to a sitting position and then fell face forward hard onto the cement letting out a wail that elicited a

sick feeling in me. It was very painful to watch. This beautiful little child was overwhelmed by the difficulty of merely standing alone a couple of feet apart from comforting mothering.

Studies of neglected and abused children offer a beacon of hope. Some children do well despite the harshness of their childhood. Researchers call these children resilient and found that they have significant others such as extended family, neighbors and teachers, the proverbial village in their lives that can offset the effects of abuse and neglect. Another interesting finding amidst the bleak reality some children suffer is that children who have had adults help them understand and cope with difficult situations can become more capable of coping with future difficulties. Researchers have referred to this experience as stress inoculation. That is, some children who have had help coping with hardships seem to become inoculated against future adversity because they have had help with managing difficulties.

As adults we face several kinds of traumatic effects. One is the legacy of any unresolved trauma from our past; the other is the challenge of dealing with very emotionally difficult situations as they might arise in our current lives. Also, we come to know the after effects of trauma in the lives of those with whom we are in relationship.

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS AND POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH IN ADULTHOOD

Following the cessation of trauma, there are predictable psychological experiences. One type of experience is characterized by remembering and reliving the trauma-- going over the trauma in one's mind and being alert to its reoccurrence. The purpose of remembering and reliving is often understood as an effort to make sense of the overwhelming experience of trauma so it can be avoided or coped with in the future. A flashback is an example of the involuntary and intrusive nature of reliving the trauma. The second type of post

traumatic experience involves forgetting and denying the trauma and its emotional impact so that one can return to a normal life without disruptive painful memories. These post-traumatic coping responses occur naturally without conscious intention and sometimes give trauma survivors an experience of being out of control of their own mind.

In the ideal situation the trauma survivor manages the strong painful feelings, makes meaning out of the experience over time and may even be stronger for it. Research in recent years has focused on post-traumatic growth and indicates that most individuals experience at least a renewed appreciation for life following trauma. The development of other coping skills, including skills to cope more effectively with strong negative feelings, are not uncommon following trauma. However, when a survivor is not particularly resilient or inoculated against extreme stress, the long-term effects of trauma can be substantial. In unresolved trauma, it is common for the denial and forgetting process to result in a restriction in one's capacity to experience pleasure and a vulnerability to experience dysregulated distressing feelings such as anger, anxiety, depression and guilt. In extreme cases the need to avoid distressing affects can result in the suppression of emotions as well as an avoidance of situations that are likely to stir up feelings. Thus, unresolved trauma can result in emotional poverty and the avoidance of challenging situations in everyday life. Unresolved trauma leaves one less capable of fully participating in life.

ADDICTION AND RECOVERY

Following trauma and other significant stressors, people sometimes turn to alcohol, drugs, food or sex

for relief of emotional distress. While substances and compulsive behaviors can provide temporary relief from distress, habitual reliance on such activities usually becomes an addictive problem. Additionally, reliance upon these activities for coping interferes with the development of other coping strategies for managing distressing feelings. It is not uncommon for those who become sober at midlife to realize that their coping skills stopped developing when they began to habitually use substances or compulsive behaviors to relieve emotional distress. Those in recovery know the acronym HALT which stands for hungry, angry, lonely and tired. This acronym reminds people that it is at times of emotional neediness or vulnerability that they are at greater risk for turning to addictive behavior.

PERSPECTIVES FROM THERAPY

My professional perspective on adult development has evolved out of my work with psychotherapy clients and psychotherapists in training. When clients come to see me they are usually motivated by a crisis of some sort. As the acute problem resolves, most clients turn their attention toward issues that are of a more long-standing nature. Often they want to process some upsetting past experience, look at some problem they have learned to live with over the years, or address some obstacle in the way of accomplishing some important goal. It is not unusual for people to bring up issues about which they have never talked to another person or they have tried to talk but have felt judged or misunderstood.

In most cases, unresolved feelings are at the root of it--unresolved feelings due to loss, some hurt to them, some hurt they have caused someone else, or some fear that holds them back. In therapy we

Those in recovery know the acronym HALT which stands for hungry, angry, lonely and tired. This acronym reminds people that it is at times of emotional neediness or vulnerability that they are at greater risk for turning to addictive behavior.



work on resolving these issues. While the details of everyone's therapeutic process are unique, there are some common issues. One key challenge for the client is to talk about anything and everything that might be related to the problem. To do this the client must strive to be open to the thoughts and feelings that emerge in their own mind during therapy.

The key challenge for me, or for any therapist I believe, is to maintain a therapeutic environment in which the client can talk about anything. And, a key task for both of us is to be alert for anything that interferes with the common task of being able to talk about anything, and then talk about that interference.

In the context of being alert to potential interferences in therapy, it would be wise to discuss transference. This term has a history of being misunderstood and like some feelings, has been feared and avoided by some. Transference is rooted in normal human processes that occur in every day life. In therapy (at least some therapies), freely talking about transference phenomena is considered one of the most important keys for resolving past and current problems in affective functioning. Transference is based on normal mental processes. The mind's task is

to make sense out of millions of bits of information available in every single moment. To accomplish this formidable task, the mind uses past experience to interpret current experience and to predict future possibilities.

The most important personally relevant experiences are encoded in the emotional centers of the brain without linguistic representation. This is affective knowledge. Experience that has been processed analytically is represented in the more linguistic centers of the brain. When clients enter therapy it is only natural for them to intentionally, as well as automatically and unconsciously, draw upon all their past experiences to understand the therapist and therapy situation. This is transference. So too, therapists draw upon all their past personal and professional experiences, consciously and unconsciously, to work with the client.

For historical reasons, therapist transference has been called countertransference, but it is merely the therapist's transference. To the extent that clients and therapists enter therapy with overwhelmingly positive interpersonal experiences especially in helping, healing and teaching situations (this

would of course include childhood experiences with parents and other older adults), therapy proceeds without a hitch and the transference is hardly noticed. However, most clients and therapists have had a mix of positive and negative interpersonal experiences and so it is likely that client and therapist will sometimes experience each other in ways that detract from the therapeutic ideal. Research suggests that when hitches in the transference do happen and are then resolved through client-therapist collaboration, the therapeutic outcomes are much better than if there had never been any transference-related difficulties in the first place.

TRANSFERENCE: RESOLVING THE PAST IN THE PRESENT

Clients and therapists are continuously interpreting what each other says and does as they move forward with the task of resolving problems of living in the world outside of therapy. When the client experiences the therapist as critical, or the therapist experiences the client as withdrawing from participating in therapy, are these perceptions accurately based in the presence of or unduly influenced by transference? When these sorts of questions are not talked about, the open exploration that should characterize therapy would be compromised. So how should such questions be resolved?

Historically many have considered the therapist as the paragon of mental health and the objective arbiter of all such questions. The client's perception from this sort of perspective would likely be considered transference and whatever realistic basis the client might have for perceiving the therapist as critical would be at best minimized, at worst ignored. However, my view is consistent with more recent developments in psychotherapy and suggests that these kinds of questions about therapist or therapy are more fruitfully examined from a perspective of inter-subjectivity. That is,

both therapist and client are recognized as having subjective points of view (that include transference or prior knowledge), both points of view contribute to the process of therapy, and it is only through an open collaborative discussion that transference-related questions can be resolved with a consensual understanding. It is interesting to note that in my experience clients usually have some reality basis when they bring up their concerns about the therapy or me, the therapist. However, such issues often have a root in the client's prior experience (transference) which has made them perceptive regarding these issues.

Thus transference often has the potential to bring an earlier unresolved issue into the present where, under good therapeutic conditions, it can be examined both for its current relevance and its past significance. In the case where a client might have experienced me as critical, the client has an opportunity to directly address the issue with me, an authority figure, in the present. My job in the situation as therapist is to hear the client out without using the notion of transference to deflect the client's perception of my behavior as wrong, neurotic or unrealistic. I would also have to examine my own contribution to this perception without making the client's therapy my own. I might acknowledge that although it was not my intention to be critical, I could see how the client experienced me that way.

Alternatively, I might say that there was something the client said that made me uneasy and that I had been critical but that criticism was not a very effective way for me to respond to the client about an issue that was of concern. Ultimately, I would hope to restore our relationship to one in which the client experienced me as an ally rather than a critical judge. I would also hope that the client's successful confrontation of me, an authority figure, would provide some reparation for earlier unsuccessful efforts at resolving conflict with authority figures.

THE PROFESSIONAL IS PERSONAL

In training therapists I have had the opportunity to help them discover that which others have helped me discover - that it is the person of the therapist rather than any particular therapeutic method that is most helpful to clients. And, it is emotional self-awareness in the context of developing therapeutic relationships that is essential to the process of being a professional therapist. I cannot imagine that these two factors, affectivity and relationality, are any less important for anyone who strives to be of service to others.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Dr. Keenan notes that feelings are felt in bodies, not minds. This sentence has many applications: among other ideas, we should not be afraid of emotions and bodily reactions but rather, we need to respect them, name them and then seek to regulate them. Think about that reality in your own experience or in the case of people with whom you are working in some ministerial relationship.
2. Dr. Keenan notes that in therapy the “person” of the therapist is more important than the “method” employed. His insight could also be applied to all forms of helping/healing ministries: the “minister” must be in touch with his or her own struggles, needs, gifts, emotions, etc. How has this process played out in your experience as care-giver and/or care-receiver?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

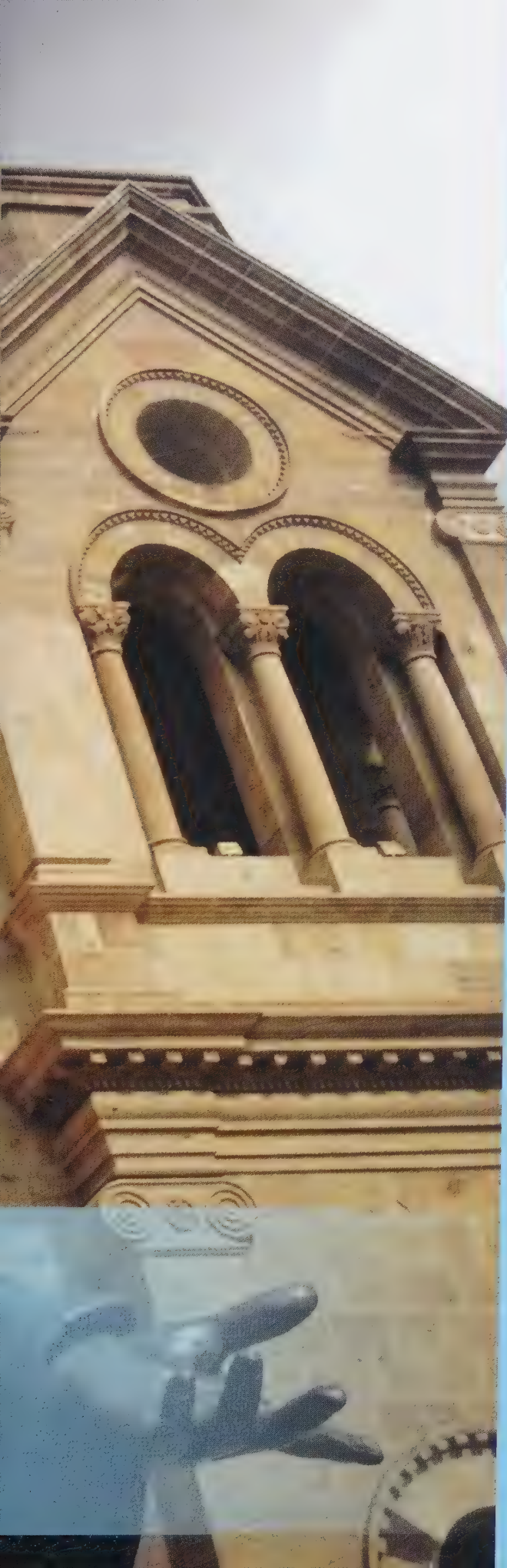
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CLEARING THE CHANNEL

HOW TO SAVE OURSELVES FROM BURNOUT

Jeffrey



"MAKE ME A CHANNEL OF YOUR PLACE..."

Excerpt of 17th-century

We cannot believe the proper situation (in a) private matter about my personal teaching, or care of the college. But when I do to keep my own channel clear I always worked as an additional counselor. In decades, I know something about ~~my~~ management and unrelenting stress. For most of us, they are part of the job description. What can I do to keep the channels clear and avoid burnout?

The neglect of this question killed a coworker of mine, shucking everyone in the organization. It was early in my career, and burnout was not yet well understood. As a staff, we dismissed the notion of self-care; fast not too balance withered as his mental approached.

I had worked with Fr. Kiley (not his real name) at a large residential treatment center. Our offices were right next to each other on the main hall of the counseling wing. I saw him every day, but he barely returned my greetings in the morning, making it clear he was too busy for conversation. It was my first job in the addiction recovery field, and I was eager to learn from his experience, but his door was usually closed.

Besides being a Catholic priest, he had been a colonel in the Marine Corps, and he thrived on precision and duty. He taught his patients to make their beds with military corners, and loaded them up with reading and writing assignments. Fr. Kiley stayed late every night to give his men extra one-to-one sessions, and usually came in on the weekends, too. He demanded a lot from his patients, but he always gave them more.

I tried to get Kevin Kiley to come to lunch with the other counselors, but he was chronically overbooked. When his doctor confronted him about smoking, he started cutting his filterless cigarettes in half.

**"I'M ONLY SMOKING HALF AS MUCH,"
HE SAID. HIS DEFIANCE WAS PALPABLE.**

Like most of the staff, he was a recovering alcoholic; and while he was undeniably a good counselor, something seemed to be missing. He was clear about his faith in God, but what channels did he open up for God to work in his life? In the end, we all dismissed the issue, and besides Kevin was not about to entertain our concerns.

In August, Fr. Kiley took a vacation to visit a relative six hundred miles away. He went off for a leisurely drive and never returned. On the way back, he locked himself in a desolate motel room and drank himself to death. All of us on the staff were stunned. How could the toughest and most disciplined man

among us have been the one to self-destruct? How could the man of steel crack?

Easy clichés come to mind, of course. If you do not bend, you break, and so on. But Fr. Kiley was a highly educated man, and surely too smart to fall into such a trap. Had he not warned his men about taking their recovery for granted? Now he had become a cautionary tale.

Ordained clergy and religious, along with teachers, counselors and healthcare professionals, are notorious for not taking care of themselves. We may be adept at guiding others through their difficulties, but how are each of us faring with our own challenges? Visit any of the places we work and have a look at the staff. Most of us are far from shining examples of wellness, and many of us struggle with the effects of chronic stress.

Burnout comes from giving more than we have got, on a continuing basis. Defined more precisely: burnout is likely to occur when emotional and psychological demands exceed a person's emotional and psychological resources. The indicators of burnout and chronic stress often begin unnoticed. Not all symptoms may be present at any one time, and only a few are needed to cause major problems. Some symptoms are shared with anxiety and depression, either or both of which can follow from more advanced cases. Here are seven warning signs to watch for:

1. Irritability and hopelessness about your profession
2. Unhealthy changes in eating habits and weight
3. Feelings of emotional or physical exhaustion
4. Getting sick more often
5. Insufficient rest and poor sleep habits
6. Emotional isolation from friends and family
7. Increased use of alcohol, mood altering drugs, or sleep aids.

The prayer of St. Francis shows that I can be a channel of God's peace, consolation, and joy. However, I do not have the power to confer those things on other people. My greatest ministry is to keep my channel clear, so I can be a more effective instrument. A clogged channel leads to burnout.

My profession can remain rewarding, and I can be more effective in my work, if I make the time to renew and refresh myself. There are physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions to burnout, but here's a pragmatic approach to addressing the immediate problem.

1. Accept the Job. The goal of taking better care of myself can only be done by me. Acceptance must be wedded to action to be meaningful, so I must be prepared to follow through. Paradoxically, it is best if I do not try to do it all by myself.

2. Talk to someone. Start by bringing the issue into the light. Talk to a friend, therapist, or mentor. An open discussion will help reveal the next steps you should take. This person may also become your accountability partner, to help keep you on track. In the case of a friend, you may agree to help each other.

3. Start Small. Do not make sweeping resolutions. Take it one step at a time, and keep it simple. For example: do not say you are going to join a gym and lose thirty pounds. Instead, make a date for a yoga class or a therapy session. Do not let anything get in the way of this appointment. It will be easier the second time, and you will start building momentum.

4. Check your fuel. Your body has specific needs, and it cannot manufacture blood cells from refined sugar. Many of us rely on caffeine and sweets to jump-start our day, with a predictable crash a few hours later. Get smart and adjust your diet to a more sustainable fuel mix. Cake is for celebrations, not for dinner. Your body will reward you with better physical and mental health.

5. Reconnect. Make time for people you enjoy. Go to a movie with a friend, or get in with a group. Accept the invitation you might decline, like a relative's birthday party. Volunteer for something outside your field. Stay a few minutes after your class or meeting, and strike up a little conversation. Join a choir, a bike club, or a cooking class. Isolation breeds depression.

6. Rest. If you are glued to a TV, social media, or games before going to sleep, your brain will suffer. In order to fall asleep naturally, try reading a book before bed—not the news. For a change of pace, try a historical novel. Reduce or eliminate the use of mood-altering chemicals to relax. Discontinue the use of sleep aids. Discuss the long-term effects of any medications with your doctor. Stress cannot be managed chemically. Take a walk and you will rest easier.

7. Move from Me to We. You can add spiritual power to your plan by joining a group. God works through people, and our emotional jail cell opens from the inside. Most of us qualify for a Twelve Step group of some kind, whether Al-Anon, Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACoA), or another group. Healing happens when we allow ourselves to be vulnerable. Where can I find my fellow travelers? Take a risk and check it out.

One woman embodied this plan, and inspired me to take better care of myself. I met her long after she had completed her transformation, but her story left an indelible mark on my heart. When I knew her, she was a slight, spry seventy-year-old, with a penetrating intellect. I found it almost impossible to believe that her 5'2" frame used to weigh two hundred pounds.

Sister Clarice Martin (not her real name) had been the dean of a Catholic university. A brilliant Ph.D., she had risen through the system for twenty-five years, until she had the top job at age 50. But she found isolation and frustration, as she tried to

balance the innumerable needs of the institution with the constant demands for fund-raising. If she ever found relief, it was late at night in her rooms with an abundance of sugar. After five years as dean she gained eighty pounds, and became a type 2 diabetic. Her legendary energy was flagging, and she was on the verge of double knee replacement surgery. Her doctor—an old friend—finally confronted her. “You’ve done a fine job of manufacturing these problems,” he said. “I can schedule surgeries, and I can prescribe medication, but if you don’t make some changes, you’re going to get sicker.” Sr. Clarice was about to dress him down when he asked a question.

“DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH A BOWLING BALL WEIGHS?”

“NO,” SHE SAID.

“Seventeen pounds,” he said. “You’ve got four bowling balls in your lap every time you stand up, and you’ve got four around your waist every time you walk down the stairs. You’re destroying yourself.”

Sr. Clarice was fuming, but decided not to respond so she could get out of the examining room.

“I’m giving you a prescription,” he said. “You can either follow it or find a new doctor.”

The dean was too smart to avoid the inevitable, but what she found most egregious in his list of remedies was that she begin attending meetings of Overeaters Anonymous (OA). The very words seemed humiliating to her, especially in light of her accomplishments. But one thing the doctor said convinced her to give it a try.

“Do you want to meet your maker after committing suicide on the installment plan?”

It took eighteen months, but Sr. Clarice did it all. She began by working with a dietician who helped

reform her eating habits. Sr. Clarice was known to skimp on breakfast and lunch, and then overeat in the evening. A more balanced diet improved the way she felt, even before the weight came off.

She also started working with a trainer, who slowly got her moving again. The dean was never going to be an athlete, but she became an inveterate walker, which dovetailed nicely with her new lunch schedule. Instead of staying in her office, she started walking around the campus, visiting the various departments, and joining people for lunch. She refrained from talking about work while eating, and got to know her faculty and staff personally.

Instead of isolating in her rooms at night, Clarice began to reconnect with old friends and family. Instead of dreading them, she started to look forward to holidays, weddings, and birthdays. She found the pressures of her job evaporated at her grand-niece’s wedding. She rejoined the stream of life.

At the same time, Sr. Clarice began attending meetings of Overeaters Anonymous. Of all the changes she made, this was perhaps the most revolutionary. In a Twelve Step group, distinctions of class, education, and religion are dismissed out of hand. Instead, the group focuses on helping each other through their shared difficulties, with more experienced members leading the way. Ironically, Sr. Clarice found comfort in being a beginner again. She didn’t need to have all the answers. Instead, she learned to focus on doing the next right thing. She found herself to be one among equals.

Sr. Clarice retired from the university at 60 and went back to school for a master’s degree in counseling. She had nothing more to prove, and decided to do what she loved. I met her at the same organization where Fr. Kiley and I had worked. Her insights during clinical case conferences were legendary. She was able to synthesize therapeutic techniques

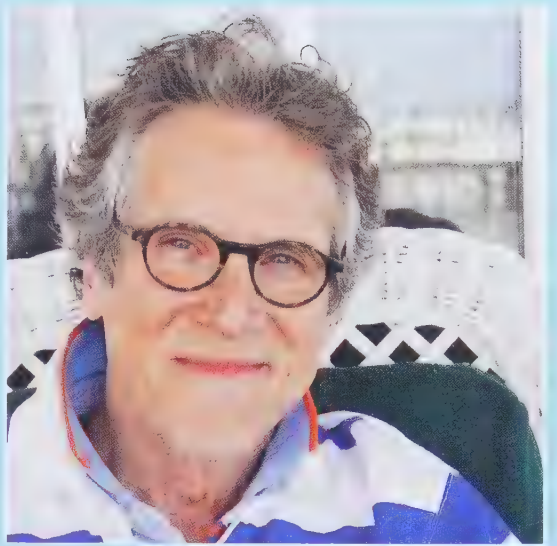


with Twelve Step spirituality effortlessly, always as a channel of love. At 70 years of age, she was healthier than I was at 35, and quietly practiced the program that had saved her life. It was almost impossible to believe she had once come so close to self-destruction. She was a walking testimonial, whose actions spoke even louder than her eloquent words.

Sr. Clarice and others helped me develop small routines to avoid burnout. One of the most important is beginning every day with quiet time. Instead of having my coffee with social media, news, or music. I have my daily readings and a time alone with God. I do a spot check on my channel and get honest about any blockages. What do I need to change? What do I need to accept? And as I look to the days ahead, I know I am not alone: We are all channels with and for each other.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Jeff Jay uses the image of being a “channel” of peace and reminds us that – by definition – a channel must be kept clean and open, uncluttered by any behavior, prejudice or fear. What subtle “things” might be preventing me from being a truly “open” channel for God’s grace at this time in my life? Am I trying to do something about it?
2. A major point Jeff Jay makes in his essay is the importance of moving from “I” to “we.” In some cases it might mean joining a group for therapy; in other cases, it might be more a matter of attitude and refusing to take on the role of being a hero who is a “lone ranger.” Where am I in this dynamic: do I try to “do it all” or do I recognize my need for others and am I grateful for the gifts of openness and dialogue we can share?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeff Jay is a retired teacher and a spiritual director. He is the author of *Channeling the Holy Spirit* and *Channeling the Holy Spirit: A Practical Guide*. He is also a frequent speaker at conferences and retreats.

PRAISING AND GLORIFYING GOD AS EMBODIED SPIRITS

Msgr. John Zenz

This reflection piece is offered as a complement to the articles in this issue. It may be helpful for personal prayer and could perhaps be suitable for a Penance Service.



1. "THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND MADE HIS DWELLING AMONG US." (JOHN 1:14)

Christ Jesus, the eternal Word and Son of the Father, took on human flesh that He might reveal to us not only God's love but also to affirm the dignity and potential of human flesh. Everything of His earthly journey proclaims the goodness of our bodies and spirits: His conception and birth, hidden life at Nazareth, labor as a carpenter, His healing of the sick and letting Himself be touched lovingly and also violently in abuse and by being nailed to a cross.

- Do I listen with all my heart and body for the Word? Am I conscious of carrying God's Word in my person?
- Meditate on Christ touching and being touched. For example, like the Beloved Disciple, imagine yourself leaning against His chest, resting in His acceptance. By the women of the Gospel who wept at His feet or anointed Him, let Him heal the aspects of your bodily life that cause you grief or shame.
- How often do I thank God for the gift of my body even with its aches and pains?
- Do I believe that my body and the physical material of our lives is also a "Word" of God?
- Do I believe that in my body/spirit, I am an "undivided" Word?

2. "THIS ONE, AT LAST, IS BONE OF MY BONES AND FLESH OF MY FLESH..." (GENESIS 2:23)

The body is made for communication; even without words, our bodies express a message, the ability to listen or receive. Our body can also express – without words – a deep tiredness, a listless spirit shutting down or a hopeful desire to connect... Successful body language needs to be clear and transparent, mutually respectful of the boundaries and limits of shared time and space.

- What "language" does my body communicate to others? Openness? Disinterest? Generosity? Strength?
- How do I "use" my body to fulfill my life-vocation and state of life (married, single, celibate, consecrated religious)?
- In my relationships, am I respectful of the space of the other? Do I appreciate and affirm male-female diversity and complementarity?
- What do I communicate by the use of my eyes?
- Am I comfortable with intimacy and vulnerability?

A. "THIS IS MY BODY WHICH WILL BE GIVEN UP FOR YOU... THIS IS THE CHalice OF MY BLOOD WHICH WILL BE SHED FOR YOU AND FOR MANY FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS..." (INSTITUTION NARRATIVE OF THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER)

- Do I recognize the in-built hungers of my body and spirit – for food, companionship and God? Does my own hunger help me to be more sympathetic with the hungers of the world?
- Do I believe that my body is a gift to be given in loving service? How do I make my body a gift or living sacrifice back to God or for others?
- Christ's life and love were total and unreserved. How does the selfless generosity of Christ flow through me?
- As Christ is "really present" to us, am I "really present" to Him and other people?
- Do I understand that my body itself can be an instrument of redemption – for myself but also for others?
- Do I see the connection between respect for body and the way we use bread and wine, water and oil as means of worship of God?

- Do I believe that my “body” is a permanent reminder that I can exist only as part of a cosmic web of relationships, the Body of Christ?
- Do I appreciate the truth that while I have “rights” over my body, I am also accountable for how I care for it and that my decisions about my own well-being affect others? Do I see myself as a “steward” of my body?
- How does my belief in the Resurrection of the body impact how I look at my own body? Do I truly believe that God loves my human body and the bodies of all people?
- Do I think of God as a partner with me in an intimate sharing of life, gifts and talents?
- How often do I call upon Him to guard and guide me, to embrace or heal me?

5. “GOD BLESSED THEM, SAYING TO THEM: ‘BE FERTILE AND MULTIPLY; FILL THE EARTH AND SUBDUE IT...’” (GENESIS 1:28)

- Ordinarily, with the blessing of God, our bodies can reproduce and generate the continuation of the human family. While not everyone is in life circumstances for sexual intimacy, we should all look for ways to be generative and creative.
- According to my vocation and state in life, how am I creative?
- Am I a good mentor and guide for others? Do I encourage young people to see their life-choices as vocations for service of Church and world?
- Do I pass on spiritual gifts as well as physical life?

- Do I believe my body itself has a certain “vocation” implanted within it? (See Psalm 139: 13-16)
- Have my bodily limitations become – in some mysterious way – an offering of love to build up the rest of the Body of Christ? (see Colossians 1:24)
- Do I believe that I am physically connected with all the elements of creation – air, earth, water? Do I reverence and respect all created reality?

“FORGET YOU THEREFORE, BY THE MERCIES OF GOD TO OFFER YOUR BODIES AS A LIVING SACRIFICE HOLY AND PLEASING TO GOD. YOUR SPIRITUAL WORSHIP.” (ROMANS 12:1)

- Do I believe that the sacrifice God truly wishes is an obedient heart, one that accepts all that which is given (and all that is not given)?
- Do I believe that taking time to care for my physical and psychological well-being through exercise, diet and therapy can actually be an act of worship of God?
- At the present time in my life, what legitimate bodily “needs” may I be ignoring (for example, adequate sleep, moderation in drinking and eating, serenity when driving, visiting the doctor...)?
- Do I take time to marvel at the wonder of nature and “pray the experience” of all the seasons?
- What does my prayer posture say about my relationship with the Lord?
- How does physical abuse endured by others factor into my spiritual life? Do I faithfully pray for all who suffer in body or spirit?
- How do I deal with attraction toward some people because of their beauty or personality and being drawn away from people who seem less physically appealing? Do I try to see all people as God does?

7. "MAY THE GOD OF PEACE HIMSELF
MAKE YOU PERFECTLY HOLY AND MAY
YOU ENTIRELY, SPIRIT, SOUL AND BODY, BE
PRESERVED BLAMELESS FOR THE COMING OF
OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST." (1 THESSALONIANS
5:23)

- Am I grateful for all the specific aspects of my physical person and do I strive to see my body and temperament complement each other?
- Do I rejoice in the gifts of body and spirit which others enjoy and manifest? Can I marvel at their gifts without becoming competitive or jealous?
- Can I resonate with the reflective insight and prayer of the 1924 British Olympian runner in Chariots of Fire: "God made me capable of running fast and I feel His pleasure when I run fast?"
- Am I able to see how physical well-being and spiritual health necessarily complement each other?
- How am I doing in trying to keep all aspects of my "embodied spirit" in harmony?

FINALLY, MAKE YOUR OWN THE
SEXTET OF HOPKINS' SONNET;
AS KINGFISHERS:

I say more: the just man justices;
Keeps grace:
that keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye
he is – Christ – for Christ plays in ten
thousand places,
Lovely in limbs,
and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through
the features of men's faces.





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SUCCESS

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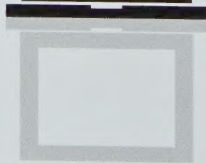
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